492

ADONIA,

A

DESULTORY STORY.

Printed by T. Plummer,
Seething-Lane.

[redacted]

ADONIA,

A DESULTORY STORY,

492

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

INSCRIBED, BY PERMISSION, TO

HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH.

VOL. I.

There is a kind of justice which a man ought to observe towards himself, even should he exist solitary on the earth: he should govern all his affections and habits, that he may be enslaved by none.

MADAME ROLAND.

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TO HER GRACE

THE DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH,

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL

MADAM,

HAVING obtained your Grace's permission to dedicate to you the following juvenile performance, which I have acknowledged to be rather "a candidate for favor *than for* fame," *I feel it necessary to account to the world for the presumption of laying at* YOUR *feet so simple and unpretending an offering.*

The native of a part of the kingdom which owes the embellishment of its natural beau-

ties,

ties, and the increasing prosperity of its moral economy, to the influence of the Duke and Duchess of Buccleugh, may in this instance be allowed to resort to local circumstances for her apology.

I might be condemned as assuming undue consequence, by using for a novel *the formality of a dedicatory address; and* a novel *of* confessed mediocrity, *appearing under the distinguished auspices of your Grace's name, might furnish the severer critic with the well-known allusion to the injudicious painter, who places his unfinished pictures in too powerful a light. But, if my motives are rightly understood, Adonia will be considered as a sort of natural production of the domains that are fostered by your Grace's protection, seeking a share in the shelter of that benevolent patronage.*

I have

I have the honor to subscribe myself, with every sentiment of respect and veneration of your Grace's character,

MADAM,

Your Grace's most devoted,

Most obliged humble servant,

THE AUTHORESS.

London, 19 *Jan*. 1801.

ERRATA TO VOL. I.

Page 54, line 2, for laid *read* lay.
193,— 7—several *read* severe.
197,— 2—laid *read* lay.
209,— 3—this *read* his.
216,— 9—wearing off *read* wearied of.
224,—13—*dele* he thought.
234,— 9—mistook *read* mistaken.
238,— 7—eyes fixed *read* eyes were fixed.
239,— 6—have miſtook *read* be miſtaken.
253,—13—better *read* bitter.

Mrs Aiskelle

ADONIA.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL. *

CHAP. I.

As guileful goldsmith, that by secret skill
With golden foil doth finely overspread
Some baser metal, which commend he will
Unto the vulgar, for good gold insted,
He much more goodly gloss thereon doth shed
To hide his falsehood, than if it were true.

SPENCER.

AMONG the many causes of human error or misery, the mistakes of the imagination have ever been found most ruinous to the native energies of mind; and the false refinements of feeling and sentiment, of which they are commonly productive, prove equally fatal to happiness.

But an ardent imagination and glowing sensibilities are qualities so peculiarly graceful in youth, and so congenial with the season of opening prospects and expanding affections; they are so frequently the growth of genius and virtue, and so often mistaken for genius and virtue themselves, that they are seldom restrained by the *preceptor*, and almost always cherished by the *pupil* with pleasure and pride.

The entrance into active life determines whether or not they are the genuine offspring of virtue, and sometimes repels their evil, and fixes their better influence over the heart, by exposing the fallacies of an overstrained imagination, and discovering the real uses of a well-regulated sensibility.

The vicious, who have nourished these alluring qualities, and been applauded for them in early youth, employ their energy of fancy and warmth of feeling only to render

render themselves more pre-eminent in vice or folly; and gloss over their errors by this specious excuse, that their passions originate in sensibility, and their excesses spring from the ardor of an aspiring mind.

But there are some on whom nature has stamped her brightest characters,—justice, courage, and magnanimity; talents fitted to instruct, and virtues to improve, mankind; who, indulging in the false refinements of fancy and feeling till they have gained the ascendancy over sober reason and sound judgment, enter their career of life with high-wrought expectations, which they find every where disappointed, and turn with acrimony from a world wherein they find so few congenial objects, without deigning to examine its advantages, or hoping to conquer its disgusts. "I would have my son learn his principles in the world," said a certain writer, who decried the philosophy of Zimmerman,

"and then, if you will, conducted to solitude, to *fix* his choice."

The Marquis de Bellefonde reversed the sentiment, and sent his only son, the Vicomte de Rosier, to fit himself for the world in solitude.

It has often been maintained, that education, rather than nature, stamps the character of man; and if such is the influence of education over refractory minds, how much more powerfully must it operate where nature seconds its designs?

Theodore de Rosier, virtuous, susceptible, and enthusiastic, became in solitude ardent, romantic, and incredulous of evil. Virtuous and sincere himself, he expected to find equal sincerity and virtue in every one he felt disposed to love; and those whom he once loved he could never learn to suspect.

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In this retirement he became acquainted with a young man whose sensibility was as glowing as his own, and whose mind seemed equally ardent and amiable; but his ardour appeared to be checked by timidity, and his talents were often veiled by an air of submission and deference to the opinions of others; which, to those who were unacquainted with him, represented him rather as a passive and undecided character than as one who was born to persuade and command. De Rosier, sensible of his high intellectual endowments, admired him the more for his diffidence. Finding his sentiments congenial with his own, he adopted him as his friend; and from that moment the young Comte de l'Avignon was arrayed in all the amiable colours which were reflected by his own heart.

They entered the world together, but with very different promises of success.

The Marquis de Bellefonde was a Minister of France, and the most distinguished favorite of his weak and profuse master, Louis the Fifteenth:—he was seated on the right hand of power, and laden with riches and honors. De Rosier therefore had only to choose, and be preferred. The Comte de l'Avignon, on the contrary, inherited, by the death of an extravagant father, only the nobility of a proud and ancient family, without a sufficient revenue to support even the appearance of that splendor which had, during several centuries, belonged to it; and the old Comte had rendered himself so obnoxious at court, by the failure of certain political intrigues in which he had involved himself, that it required no common interest to reinstate his son in that sphere after which his secret ambition taught him to pant. A connection with the Marquis de Bellefonde seemed most likely to forward the attainment

ment of the first object of his wishes,—a reconciliation with the Monarch, and a favorable introduction to his notice. It was with this end in view, young as he was, that the crafty De l'Avignon had thrown himself in De Rosier's way, and assiduously cultivated his friendship, by rendering his conduct conformable to the dispositions which he saw most predominant in his character. Possessed of every art that can veil the secret soul, and every endowment that could dazzle the judgement of the open and susceptible De Rosier, his success in winning that friendship was as natural as the infatuation was strange which continued it to him through a long series of years; and the Marquis de Bellefonde, whose parental conduct had always been marked by a blind acquiescence in his son's wishes, permitted him to bring his friend with him to Versailles, where the court then was, and to offer him an abode in his house. The latter invitation

invitation De l'Avignon chose to decline; the former he accepted with a diffident reserve, spoke of his father's disgrace, of his own narrow circumstances and limited talents to make his way in a court, and finally suffered himself to be *persuaded* by his friend, after which he accompanied him to Versailles.

In a court where the extravagant frivolity of fashion, and the daring licentiousness of pleasure, seemed at the first view calculated only to inspire disgust in a delicate and ingenuous mind, it may well be supposed that De Rosier found few congenial objects; and his distaste of the general manners which prevailed there united him more closely to De l'Avignon; who knew so well how to feign the virtues which *he* in reality possessed. But his rank and his father's connections obliging him to assimilate himself in some measure to the manners of those around him, and his native disposition inclining him rather

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to overlook error than to expose or judge it harshly, he became by degrees familiarised and reconciled to what had at first sight startled and disgusted him, and he possessed the rare art of culling, from among the weeds of voluptuousness and folly, those flowers of elegant taste and polite urbanity with which they are often mingled, without imbibing any of the poisons of the former.

The same refinement of mind, which rendered him invulnerable to the glaring vices he saw around him, produced that desire to please and acquire an exterior polish, which often leads the young and inexperienced to woo the society of the elegant though dissolute, and the witty though unprincipled, for the sake of their extrinsic qualifications; and De Rosier became the convivial companion, and the graceful man of fashion, without degenerating into frivolity, or yielding to the temptations of vice.

 But,

But, though his outward carriage was thus finished by the manners of the world; though he had discovered at once, that a court was not the scene to realize those dreams of heroic disinterestedness and of refined love which had been the favorite speculation of his fancy in solitude, he was far from resigning the belief that he should one day be able to make them his own: his heart still cherished the romantic sentiments by which these expectations were nourished, and his conversation often betrayed the singular and visionary ideas which had formed to him an anticipated world of his own, wholly different from that which he inhabited. At court, every thing that was *outré* was admired; and the handsome Vicomte de Rosier's romantic flights, his poetical language, and his happy union of the chastest delicacy with the most daring independence of mind, rendered him the leading favorite of the day in the circles of

of fashion as well as among the men most distinguished for learning and taste.

He did not however at once succeed in securing an equally favorable reception for his friend: perhaps those to whom he strove to recommend him were more clear-sighted than himself; perhaps De l'Avignon was suspected of inheriting his father's principles:—But De Rosier was too zealous in friendship to be easily discouraged; and, fully persuaded that De l'Avignon could have borne no part in the conduct which had occasioned his father's disgrace, he at length carried his cause himself to the foot of the throne. He painted to the King, in the most glowing language, the worth and high abilities of his friend;—he described him as a character pre-eminent without vanity, and lofty-minded without pride;—and even went so far, as to expostulate against the injustice of involving an innocent person in the obloquy of his predecessor.—The King was at first

disposed to resent a language so unprecedented; but De Rosier's youth, his energy, his kindling eye and glowing countenance, which seemed to *look* the *impossibility* of a repulse, conveyed eloquence more persuasive than his words;—and, when strengthened by the applications of a few men in power, whom he had won over to second his own, he was at length successful, Louis promised to provide for his friend, and permitted his introduction at court.

To all those external advantages of feature and figure which lead captive the senses, and form an involuntary interest in weak minds, De l'Avignon added a juvenile and touching bashfulness of address, a seeming dread of offending, which, though perhaps the offspring of conscious depravity and shame not yet subdued, pleased by its novelty, and riveted the prepossession which his appearance immediately created. In a short time a place of

of considerable emolument at court, and a pension from the private purse of Louis, more than fulfilled De Rosier's solicitations, and opened to De l'Avignon's views, that splendid career of ambition and of power whither all his desires tended.

This important service did not terminate De Rosier's good offices in favor of his friend:—the gratitude of De l'Avignon, the modest but unbounded attachment which he displayed for his benefactor, whose age, being three years more advanced than his own, furnished a plausible excuse for that deference, (so flattering to a young mind,) which he paid to his opinions and counsels, daily strengthened the bond of their unequal intimacy, and stimulated De Rosier's zeal. He was not content with having procured for him the favor of the monarch; he felt anxious to have him the favorite of the whole court; and whoever sought to cultivate the friendship or engage the interest of De Rosier,

Rosier, found the nearest road to both by paying court to De l'Avignon. While other men learn hypocrisy in the progress of their intercourse with the world, De l'Avignon seemed to have issued forth a hypocrite from the hand of nature. Men become treacherous, cruel, and revengeful, when the frauds and cruelties practised against themselves have roused them to recriminate, by bursting asunder the ties of social union, and given a licence to passion under the plea of self-defence;—but De l'Avignon was treacherous, cruel, and revengeful, before he knew one incitement to passion beyond the suggestions of his own heart. In some, the dominion of licentious pleasure commences cautiously, and is embittered by remorse: De l'Avignon, at the age of eighteen, knew no law but his wishes, and no restraint but the necessary concealment of his libertine gratifications.

Boundless

Boundless ambition rendered him covetous and avaricious. The obscurity into which he was thrown by fortune had early taught him to improve those talents of dissimulation which seemed best calculated to aid the projects of his ambition; and nature, as though she anticipated his designs, had furnished him with a cool penetrative judgement, a firm and exhaustless mind, great powers of elocution, and uncommon beauty of person. Such was the cherished serpent which had twined its shining folds round the heart of the unsuspicious De Rosier.

When the King's blind munificence had furnished De l'Avignon with the means to indulge freely in the lawless desires of his heart, he did not, like other young men of similar propensities, launch forth into splendid extravagance or open excess. The vices to which he gave unlimited dominion were known only to those ministers of his power and pleasures whose

interest depended on their secrecy; whilst to the world he appeared the pupil of virtue and the child of benevolence.

He knew the hazards which every one must run who enters the lists avowedly as a candidate for eminence; especially in a court where interest and ambition were the grand springs of action in all; and where the favor of the monarch, on which these depended, was greatly biased by the opinions of the parasites who surrounded him, or counteracted by the secret engines of envy and malevolence, which never fail to be exercised against those whom they despair to excel. He was, therefore, as studious to conceal the splendid abilities with which nature had distinguished him, and as cautious of exerting his influence over the King, as another man would have been ambitious of displaying and exercising their advantages; and the few, who, like de Rosier, knew the superiority of his mental capacity, admired him the more

more for a moderation so judicious, and a diffidence which seemed the natural and becoming concomitant of his extreme youth.

CHAP. II.

Sweet, rouze yourself! and the weak wanton Cupid
Shall from your neck unloose his am'rous folds,
And, like a dew-drop from the lion's mane,
Be shook to air.

SHAKESPEARE.

ABOUT two years after De Rosier's introduction at court, he requested and obtained his father's permission to make a tour through Switzerland and Italy, in order to dissipate the remembrance of a late painful event, as well as to gratify his

his taste for inquiry and improvement, which had lain too long dormant, he said, amid the frivolous amusements and insipid sameness of a court-life. The event to which he alluded was indeed of a nature to draw forth the feelings of parental sympathy. He had formed an ardent and romantic attachment, such as a soul like De Rosier's could alone feel, for a young Englishwoman, a relation of his father's; whose uncommon loveliness envy could not but acknowledge, and whose interesting gentleness even age could not behold unmoved; but she had been educated in all the rigor and bigotry of the Romish religion, and, unfortunately for De Rosier's hopes, was destined by her friends to a monastic life, in which she seemed to be reconciled to her lot. Though fully acquainted with all these circumstances, De Rosier was too sanguine and romantic to consider them, until he found himself involved in the mazes of a passion which, always more lively than any other, was

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with *him* an added link to existence; which he had long sought for in vain, and which, when found, was not to be dissevered but by death.

He soon found too that his love was returned, and that he had been the cause of weaning his amiable cousin's heart from the profession for which she was designed, and to which she had once yielded herself with contented submission. He regarded himself as the destroyer of her peace; and, eager to seize on any sophistry which flattered his wishes, he persuaded himself that honor as well as love would now justify him in endeavouring to subvert those differing principles of religion which, implanted in early youth, and strengthened into deep-rooted prejudices, formed the only barriers in Miss Conway's mind against an union with him who was by education and choice a Protestant. Whatever effect his reasonings, and the more powerful rhetoric of affection,

affection, might have produced, it was however suddenly and unexpectedly counteracted by a mandate from her aunt, by whom she had been educated; who, with her dying breath directed her immediately to enter upon her noviciate, and to see her cousin De Rosier no more. With both these orders Miss Conway had resolved to comply;—no arguments were powerful enough to dissuade her from what she conceived to be her duty; and in spite of the despair and anguish of her lover, and the secret remonstrances of her own heart, she underwent the usual probationary exercises, preparatory to taking the vows; and had even arrived at the period which was to end for ever her intercourse with the world, when, to the astonishment of all who had witnessed her inflexible bigotry, she disappeared from the convent, and neither the vigilance of the ecclesiastical powers nor the anxious researches of her friends could discover the place of her retreat, or penetrate the

motives

motives of a conduct so foreign from the principles she had hitherto maintained. Hopeless as De Rosier's attachment had ever been, this mysterious stroke of fortune might naturally be supposed to overwhelm him with the deepest distress, for a dreadful uncertainty in regard to the beloved object was added to his first disappointment; but De Rosier's passions were not of that nature which blaze forth in frantic words or extravagant demonstrations. A deep gloom hung over him, but it was quiet and retired; and an air of distracted though uncomplaining perplexity sometimes mingled with his efforts at composure, which his father, and all who were acquainted with the strong affections his soul was capable of, observed with alarm, and trembled to believe that it might be the prelude of mental derangement; a dreadful consequence, which they thought but too likely to ensue from the internal convulsions of a mind deeply absorbed by passion, and ardent in all its

pursuits.

pursuits. His father therefore heard with pleasure his desire to travel, as it shewed at least that he was willing to shake off the remembrance of his disappointment; and, hoping much from change of scene and his absence from a place which must perpetually remind him of the lost object of his unfortunate attachment, he did every thing in his power to hasten and facilitate his departure. He gave him full power to remain abroad as long as was necessary to establish his tranquillity; but expressed a wish that, for his own sake, he would endeavour to confine his absence within moderate limits; as he had a project in agitation, he said, which might prove abortive by his too long delay, and which was of the last importance to his future interests.

He furnished him with a considerable sum of money for his present expences, and gave him an unlimited credit on a banker of eminence at Genoa, (where he

proposed

proposed remaining some time,) and omitted nothing which luxury could devise to make his journey easy and delightful. The sole stipulation which De Rosier himself made was, that he might be permitted to travel alone. With this the Marquis complied; and De Rosier quitted Paris, where he had some time resided, escorted only by two servants, who had long attended his person.

Not even the Comte de l'Avignon, who had formerly been entrusted with all his designs, knew any thing of the route he had taken; and a long time elapsed before the Marquis received any tiding of his welfare. At length a letter reached him, which appeared by the post-mark to have come by Genoa. De Rosier, informed him briefly, that he was well, and had recovered some degree of that tranquillity, which, however, he had little hope of ever perfectly establishing; that he would write to him from time to time, when

when opportunity served; but that he must not expect to find him a punctual correspondent; and, having no fixed residence, he was not always apprised of conveyances for his letters in time to avail himself of them.

At the end of eight months, he wrote, that his banker at Genoa had failed; and requested that his father would transmit his subsequent remittances to the hands of a banker whom he named at Geneva.

These were the only letters which the Marquis received from his son during an absence of thirteen months. He wrote but once to De l'Avignon, and the only regular channel of information, by which their fears for his welfare were relieved, was through the correspondence of one of the servants who had accompanied him from Paris; who, by De Rosier's private orders, wrote punctually at stated times to his father's maître d'hôtel; giving, among

among other general news, such accounts of his health and spirits as satisfied the Marquis, that to the languid state of the latter alone his son's silence might be attributed.

CHAP. III.

"Men, like butterflies, shew not their mealy
Wings but to the summer; and not a man,
For being simply man, hath honor!"

ABOUT this period some changes in the ministry took place, and some revolutions at court, in consequence of the King's illness, which threw the affairs of state and the distribution of power into the hands of certain nobles, who only wanted

 oppor-

opportunity to aim a deadly blow at the ambition of several of their cotemporaries, who had long been obnoxious to them.

The Marquis de Bellefonde had been too long a court-favorite not to have many rivals and enemies; and he found the ruling party prevailing against him, before he suspected what were their designs, or was even apprised of the extent of their influence.

His pensions were suddenly withdrawn; he was involved in pecuniary embarrassments, and his general interests at court, as well as with the King, were so much weakened, that, without some bold effort to sustain himself in office, he found he was in danger of being obliged to withdraw from that sphere which custom had rendered necessary to his happiness, and which to relinquish now would prove the severest mortification to his pride;—not less than a death-stroke to his ambition.

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An alliance had been projected for his son, which, by uniting his interests with those of one of the most powerful noblemen of France, and who was also a member of the leading faction, seemed now doubly desirable, and was indeed the only prop which could uphold his declining fortune. This was a marriage with that nobleman the Duc de B's. niece; who was also his ward, and the heiress of immense riches; and, as he could have no doubt of the acquiescence of a young girl who was naturally of a mild yielding disposition, and who, being educated in the seclusion of a convent, could be in no danger of forming any other attachment, he had offered this alliance to the Marquis, without reserve, at the first commencement of his guardianship. The Vicomte de Rosier was at that time preparing to leave France, with a heart fettered by other engagements; and his father did not then see all the future importance of such a connection; though he was not

then blind to its advantages. The young lady's extreme youth, however, rendered haste unnecessary, and, without urging the matter to his son, whose romantic delicacy of sentiment awed though it offended him the Marquis de Bellefonde contrived secretly to keep alive the negociation, not doubting that his son's passion for Miss Conway would yield to time and the hopelessness of a pursuit which her mysterious flight had rendered abortive. He was now tottering on the verge of ruin: the Duc de B. was not less his friend than ever; but De Bellefonde wanted means to support that appearance of splendor and independence which in a court is necessary to preserve the exterior forms of respect; and he could not bear to discover, even to him who had been his friend almost from childhood, the desperate state of his finances; although he could unblushingly look forward to sharing the harvest of his niece's fortune, when his son's union with her should

should have stamped an appearance of natural legality on his claims; at such fantastic distinctions do the refinements of false pride teach a weak mind to cavil! He had just dispatched a messenger to his son, intreating his immediate return, laying before him all the causes that rendered his compliance with the proposed union indispensable, when the confidential servant who had attended him abroad arrived at the hôtel de Bellefonde at Paris, (where the Marquis then was,) and delivered a packet, which he said demanded immediate notice and reply. It was directed in an unknown hand-writing; the seal was black, and the dress of the messenger corresponded with these evil-boding appearances: his countenance too was clouded by distress, and he wore an air of embarrassment, which, added to the other circumstances, filled the Marquis's mind with the most agonizing apprehensions for his son's fate, his only child, the pride of his age, the prop of all his hopes! and he

could not even command words to question the messenger: tearing open the packet with trembling eagerness, his fears were relieved by the sight of his son's well-known signature; but the agitation of his mind had softened him to a tenderness which greatly favored its contents; and he read with scarcely any other emotion than surprise, that his son had been some time privately married to a lady in Switzerland, who was now no more: that, to avoid being discovered by her connection, who would have prevented their union, and perhaps separated them by force, even after it had taken place, he had been compelled to make use of that secresy and dissimulation which had kept his father so long ignorant of his proceedings, and for which he now implored his forgiveness. He said that his happiness was now, indeed, gone for ever! and that no inducement could have withdrawn him thus early from a retirement eternally endeared to him, by having been the scene of that happiness, but the consideration of esta-

blishing

blishing the legitimacy of his infant-daughter in the eyes of the world; which, unless he made some public testimony of it now, the secresy he should still be obliged to observe, in regard to the mother's real name and rank, might at a future period render doubtful. To this end, he was now conducting the remains of his beloved wife to Paris; that, by depositing them in the vault of his ancestors, he might shew that respect for her memory, which, as it could belong only to her who had been his wife, would sufficiently demonstrate the relation, without obliging him to make public certain particulars of so peculiar a nature, that he could wish never to divulge them; unless, perhaps, at some future period, to the kind and indulgent audit of a father who alone held a right to scrutinize his domestic concerns. He entreated that his father would consent to pay proper honours to the memory of his departed wife, although the mystery that had attended their union could not at present be

 explained;

explained; and concluded with again imploring pardon for the deceit he had practised; which, he said, was his first deviation from truth, and would haunt his bosom with remorse to the latest moment of his existence!

At the mention of a grandchild, the Marquis's heart warmed with new tenderness, and he hesitated not a moment to grant the pardon his son solicited. Though the despondency that prevailed through the whole letter rather threw a damp over the prospects which the Marquis had in view for his son, he rejoiced that he was now once more free; and in order to stimulate his future obedience by every outward testimony of his forgiveness, he immediately set out himself to meet the mournful procession at Chatillon, where the servant directed him to find it; and attended the remains of his son's wife, in person, to Paris, where they were interred in the family-vault, with the pomp and solemnity

solemnity due to an acknowledged member of his house.

CHAP. IV.

In vain he strives the healing balm to pour;—
What hand can heal that cannot probe the sore?

HOOLE'S ARIOSTO.

Too proud to doubt his son's honor, or that he would not explain in proper time whatever was mysterious in his late conduct in a manner which would justify that mystery, the Marquis forbore to press those inquiries which he saw must create acute pain, and which he judged could not be answered so recently after his loss without awakening tender remembrances, that were

hostile to his own views. But the immediate pressure of embarrassments, which were daily accumulating, obliged him to be less delicate in regard to exposing those views; and only a week had elapsed since the day that saw the unknown mother of De Rosier's lovely infant consigned to her last home, when, summoning to his aid every claim of parental tenderness which could enforce his arguments, and assuming that language of complaint which was calculated to operate on De Rosier's feelings, he laid before him a detail of his misfortunes; the ruin that hung over him, and the expectations which he had formed from his early acquiescence in the alliance that was proposed for him, by which alone that ruin could be averted. Torn by contending emotions, the astonished De Rosier listened to his father's proposal, so repugnant to the cherished sentiments of his heart, with indescribable horror. His happiness was indeed buried with the object he had lost, and all situations

tions seemed alike to him; for there was not he thought. in all the world one solitary point of time, or possible circumstance, capable of engaging his desires, or adding aught to his misery. The future seemed a chill and dreary vacuum, and the past wore the aspect of a torturing and confused dream, which obstinately clings to memory, though the mind can hardly connect its frightful and visionary images; yet, to unite himself to a second! to offer that heart at another shrine which he had a thousand times sworn should belong eternally to her who had first possessed it! there was horror, there was sacrilege in the thought; his whole soul recoiled from it, and, too full to oppose by words what his heart could not bear to contemplate, the tide of ineffable feeling overcame his manly and resisting spirit, and tears rushed in burning torrents from his eyes. The Marquis gazed on him for some minutes with speechless emotions of sorrow, tenderness, and astonishment; but

but self-interest soon resumed its sway, and, willing to flatter himself with what he most wished to believe, he strove to think that these unusual demonstrations of anguish were produced rather by the unexpected tidings of his fall from prosperity than repugnance to the measure he proposed. He therefore again led his discourse to the former, and painted, in the agitated language of trembling pride and threatened honor, the fears and anxieties awakened by impending disgrace, should he be forced, he said, to resign his office, and retire from court (which, if his enemies failed to effect it, the ruined state of his finances would soon oblige him to) at a crisis when the King's confinement, and the artifices of parasites who surrounded his bed, precluded his vindicating himself to his Majesty; all hope of his ever re-establishing himself in the good opinion of the world would be cut off, and he must sink into disgrace and obscurity to rise no more! Those who had envied his late

late power, and whose interest was to confirm the removal of a rival once so formidable, would not fail to attribute his fall to the most disgraceful causes, to traduce his political conduct, and stamp with infamy a name which even his enemies had been accustomed to respect.—" Who, my son, can survive the loss of honor? who, highly born and nobly educated, accustomed through a long life to be respected and beloved, surrounded by friends and flatterers who have never allowed him to know the value, or learn the necessity, of self-dependence, can brook the scorn of the worthless, and the cruel taunts of the malevolent? It is easy for those to whom life is yet new, who can retrieve the failures of the past by future assiduity, to console themselves under the smart of present misfortunes. Hope is still young and pliant in their bosoms: health, strength of nerves, and vigour of intellect, exhilirate their hearts and

and ensure their prospects; and the pressure of affliction is scarcely felt before some new source of happiness invites that pursuit which conscious ability prompts them to follow; but the storm which assails the aged bends him to the ground: hope, once extinguished, springs up for him no more! He has neither time to realize its suggestions, nor activity to dare the attempt."—Observing that his son made no effort to interrupt him, but seemed buried in profound thought, and inattentive to the purpose which he aimed at, he paused a moment, and then drew the portrait nearer to himself. He took his hand: "Your father, De Rosier, is that enfeebled man! Bending under age and misfortune, and the infirmities of the mind, accumulated before their time by the blandishments of prosperity, he looks up to you as the protector and comforter of his declining years. It is in your power to save him from disgrace, from penury,—perhaps from death! and he hopes now

to

to prove, that his long and unremitting cares for your welfare have not been lavished on indifference or ingratitude."

De Rosier felt the full force of all he owed him; he could not doubt the picture which he drew; he had indeed been the kindest of parents; he had often sacrificed his own wishes to his; he had studied to avert every affliction that hovered near him; and the recollection of his various acts of kindness, rushing at once upon his mind, accused him of apathy, in having so long remained silent to his pleadings. He fervently kissed the hand in which the Marquis still held his. "Never, never," said he impressively, "shall my father have cause to repent his goodness! never shall the stings of filial ingratitude be inflicted by me!"

"Ah! prove it then, my son," cried the Marquis, with tears starting in his eyes, (extorted by pity for his son's sufferings, contending against those self-interested feelings which still urged him

to

to proceed;) "the case admits not of delay; your compliance may now be painful, but your reward will amply repay you for it,—the conscious reward of being the saviour of your father!"

"Allow me a short time," replied De Rosier, in a voice hollow and tremulous with emotion, "to examine those sentiments by which my heart has been hitherto governed:—it may be, that they are erroneous;—it may be, that the feelings which shudder at the measure you propose are of less importance than the pleadings of filial duty, which would instruct me to renounce them; yet I would act from principle and conviction; not from the impulse of a perhaps-momentary heroism, which I might hereafter be unable to maintain."

Saying these words he withdrew; and, shutting himself up in his own apartment, applied his mind to that solemn and strict self-examination which he judged necessary

sary before he ought to venture on an effort so important as reconciling opposite principles, the variance of which distracted his bosom, while it equally shocked him to think of preferring either. It has already been described, how his heart fondly cherished those romantic refinements of sentiment and feeling which commonly exist only in the first spring of youth, and which the experienced and aged know to be delusions;—which, if sometimes they give delight in prosperity, bring accumulations of wretchedness to adversity, unfelt by the disciple of sober reason, and unknown to the apathist.—His ideas of love, or the union of hearts, glowed with the fervor and delicacy of a Petrarch's, and Petrarch, in the shades of Vaucluse, never clung with stronger passion to that solitude, which excluded every image but his Laura's, than did De Rosier to the fond delirium with which his widowed heart brooded over the memory of his wife, and sickened at the thought

of

of an union with another,—that other too a stranger to him;—cold, insensible, perhaps,—accepting his hand by compulsion, or yielding from the indecision of indifference! What a contrast to the delicate though impassioned tenderness of his lost wife! De Rosier had found in her attachment something sacred and sublime.—Its simplicity, its fervor, its bashful sensibility, its total abstraction from every selfish and interested motive, its reverence of its object, and the delightful dreams which it had inspired in his own bosom, were all sketched out before him in the most glowing colours of recent memory,—all hostile to the sacrifice demanded of him.

But the claims of duty, the obligations of gratitude, the warm ties of filial-affection, which had with him lost nothing of the vivacity and submission of childhood,—these were scarcely less vigorous in his bosom, and equally urgent to be obeyed.

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The same refinement, which had strengthened the sway of romantic sentiment, had fostered *these* into principles which he shuddered to infringe. The same strain of reasoning which shocked him at the thoughts of marrying where he could not love, of doing injustice to the object of election by offering a heart already occupied, which must either deceive or act the part of ingratitude, led to a discussion on the claims of his father, and finally terminated in establishing their sovereignty.—" In regard to the former, (thought he,) it is in my power to repair the injustice of my heart by the tenderness of my conduct; but, in regard to the latter, it is the *act*, and not the *feeling*, that is required as the test of my duty; and the injustice of the heart, and of the conduct, would be united in my refusal. My conduct, in the one case, depends upon my own exertions; in the other, it admits of no alternative. My wife need never know that

that my heart is pre-occupied. I will hush her doubts by my kindness, and hide the tumults of my soul in the performance of my duty. There are a thousand ways by which I may save *her* from inquietude;—there is but one step to avert my father's ruin! But, am I able to *maintain* such a conduct to my wife? Yes;—the heart that is able to acknowledge such a decision as best, after having so long and so fondly nourished feelings hostile to it,—the heart that can resolve to sacrifice its dearest illusions to the first step, may boldly dare every other trial that may ensue." Stimulated by the tide of filial affection, to which he now gave full sway, and the conscious magnanimity which elevated his soul, he repressed every fond remembrance that would have risen to fetter his exertions; and contemplated only the triumph of being the benefactor and preserver of a father who had been the friend and tender guardian of his youth;—whose greatest error of conduct had

had been hitherto a blind acquiescence to *his* wishes, and whose only ill-founded principle, ambition, was the fault of hereditary pride,—a pride which, however erroneous, had been fostered by nature, education, and habit, which was now too deeply rooted ever to be eradicated, and which guided the springs of his remaining happiness or misery in life. Having wrought up his mind to a pitch of romantic heroism which could fear no relapse, De Rosier was a few days afterwards introduced to the lady who was his destined wife. She was now for the first time taken from the retirement in which she had been educated, and placed in the family of her guardian, the Duc de B. In France marriages of interest were too frequent to create surprise or repugnance. De Rosier's secret marriage, so early after the loss of Miss Conway, had stamped him in the general opinion as a young man of unstable affections; and Mademoiselle de la Voitiere was too little accustomed

to the study of the human heart to perplex herself with doubts of the sincerity of the lover who addressed her; especially when she found that lover every thing that her wishes had anticipated. She was young, artless, and unassuming; her face and form, though not beautiful, were pleasing and interesting; and her manners, wholly unformed, were engaging from their naïveté. She had read little; knew nothing of the world, and, excepting a few exterior accomplishments, was ignorant of even the commonest female acquirements: for she had had no maternal friend to direct her studies or encourage her exertions, and her mind was too indolent to seek out for itself the means of improvement. "This is exactly the character," said De Rosier, "whom I may deceive without wounding; easily moulded to tenderness herself, she will be willing to rely on mine; and, unacquainted with the artifices of mankind, she will not think of doubting what it will be her

interest

interest to believe. Her mind is yet unformed; it shall be my care and my reward to train it to virtue, and to teach her, by my own agonized experience, to shun the dangerous refinements of fancy and sentiment."

"And what has been *your* sad experience of the dangers of refined sentiment?" said the Comte de l'Avignon, to whom these words were addressed. "It is too late to keep up the language of romance now."

"De l'Avignon," replied he sternly, "*who* dares to judge the unwitnessed motives of the heart?'

"I would," said de l'Avignon submissively, "expose to my friend, in their true colours, those romantic illusions which I too plainly perceive still impede his happiness. I have marked with silent regret the ravages of unconquerable affliction

fliction which render you indifferent to every enjoyment; and impose, as a sacrifice, what would to most other men be the summit of ambition: I would fain see you triumph over these unavailing feelings, which can only tend to weaken a mind capable of the noblest exertions, and may perhaps terminate in the subversion of its highest powers."

"I have *deserved to suffer!*" said De Rosier in a hollow tone: "the step which I have determined upon is not less an atonement than a sacrifice. Oh! thou can'st not conceive, my friend, the load of various agonies that lie hid in this bosom! The eye of the world knows not what passes beneath *the surface* of the sea of passions! Perhaps, De l'Avignon, at some future time I may tell thee all; but not while there is a danger of weakening my resolves, by feeling more forcibly as I paint them the agonies that are written on my soul. I have a bitter part to perform,

form, but it must not be relinquished now. The decree is gone forth; leave me to accomplish it! and thou shalt then know, if I dare explain to *thee*, what I even tremble to whisper to myself;—thou shalt then know what it is to be wretched without hope, and possessed of the means of happiness without the power of enjoying them!"

When the Comte took his leave, De Rosier attended him to the door of the apartment, and just at that moment the nurse passed with his infant-daughter in her arms, whom he had never once ventured to see since their arrival in Paris. He started, but did not offer to retreat; and the woman, who had received no instructions to the contrary, imagining that he wished it, came forward, and presented to him this sweet unconscious pledge of his lost happiness. In the first impulse of parental fondness, he grasped her to his bosom, and overwhelmed her with caresses.

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She wore a black ribbon: De Rosier observed it, and a convulsive shudder distorted his whole frame; the babe almost dropped from his arms; he burst into tears, and, hastily resigning his precious burden, hurried away. "I ought to have provided against this," said he: "I must not again expose myself to such a sight, while my heart continues thus feeble." His father had a small retired villa in Normandy, above thirty leagues from Paris; thither he gave orders that his child should be immediately conveyed, and committed to the charge of an old governante who resided there, on whose care and fidelity he could rely; and, determining to avoid as much as possible every circumstance that might contribute to recal remembrances which it was his interest as well as duty to forget, he forbad even the mention of his little Adonia to him; and directed that the reports of her health and welfare should be transmitted to his father alone.

But

But the unfortunate and self-deluded De Rosier was destined to suffer the highest aggravation to which his sacrifice to a perhaps erroneous heroism was obnoxious. Three weeks had scarcely elapsed since the day in which his marriage with Mademoiselle de la Voitiere had been celebrated with the utmost pomp and festivity, when his father,—the motive of his conduct, the reward of his sacrifice, the all that was left to reconcile him to his destiny,—died of an apoplexy, after two days illness! This was a blow so sudden, so unforeseen, so dreadful to the only consolatory feelings which had supported him, that neither the lessons of systematic stoicism, which he had been labouring to adopt, nor the native vigor of his mind, could defend him from sinking beneath it.

The Duc de B. who felt a paternal interest in his welfare, and who was himself greatly shocked by his friend's sudden death, strove to supply his loss, and be

be to him the father he deplored. The Comte de l'Avignon acted the part of zealous friendship, and alternately endeavoured to animate him by lively conversation, or soothe him by the language of well-feigned sympathy; and his wife, who tenderly loved him, used every artifice of affection, every blandishment of native kindness, to withdraw him from the subjects of his hoarded anguish. He heard them all, but answered them not. Despair stood rooted on his unchanging countenance, and chained up his tongue.

His wife's gentle tenderness was but a deeper stab to his peace; though even the melting remorse it occasioned failed to alter the expression of his despair. It was deep, silent, and immoveable. The illusion of heroism was no more. He had married where he could not love;—he had involved an amiable and innocent woman in his distresses, without having it in his power to repay her tenderness by the slightest

slightest return of preference; he had violated the dearest and most sacred feelings of his heart; and the motives which had actuated him could no longer indemnify the sacrifice. With his father's death returned the overwhelming tide of former feelings, the sway of former sentiments, the renewed vigor of half-extinguished passion; and with the tears he shed upon his father's grave were mingled those which flowed for the first, the dearest, the *only*, object of his love. The fever of his soul communicated itself to his frame: he became delirious, and his life was long despaired of. Slowly at length he surmounted his disorder; and a whole year elapsed ere his recovery was pronounced certain. De Rosier blushed to remember the extent of his weakness, and strove now to repair it by renewed firmness; but still an oppressive melancholy hung over him which resisted every effort of fortitude. Despair did not now lead to phrenzy, but it was yet silent, cheerless, and solitary.

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His active benevolence, his fine talents, and his native vigor of mind, laid swallowed up by *one* idea; and the man who was with "talents to instruct and virtues to improve mankind" was lost to the world, to his friends, and to himself. He perceived at length that the world wondered at the violent and long dominion of his sorrow, and busied itself with framing conjectures on the causes of such a rare instance of filial affection, for the extent of his misfortunes was known only to himself.

He could not bear to imagine that his friends joined in these conjectures, but he knew that they had still greater reason for them, by being more intimately acquainted with all the different forms of his affliction.

He conceived that that affliction was more corrosive by the concealment of its secret cause. The Comte De l'Avignon

had

had often represented to him, that it must be so; and often urged him to fulfil his promised confidence; as, by allowing himself to talk to another on the subject of his hoarded anguish, it would become less oppressive than when all its force was confined to his own bosom, and its edge would gradually wear away by the emollients of sympathy. De Rosier was moved by his arguments, and resolved to yield to them;—in justifying sorrows, by setting forth the importance of their causes, the mourner finds a melancholy gratification in making others sensible of the charms or virtues of the object he deplores. The inward firmness which had once supported De Rosier under what was to him the bitterest of sacrifices; the prudence which represented to him the danger and folly of disclosing to another what, while concealed, could only injure himself, but exposed might involve in misery all who were most intimately connected with him, had utterly forsaken him. He was no longer

longer himself; he was "weaker than a woman's tear;" and, forgetful of every thing but the anguish which subdued him, he related those particular circumstances which rendered grief intolerable, unveiled the mystery that hung around his former marriage, and discovered to the astonished De l'Avignon, that his first wife was no other than the apostate Miss Conway, whom he had seduced from her vows, and conducted to misery and death; and whose real fate no one had ever even suspected. But, as De Rosier's narrative was more a detail of feelings than of circumstances, and as he suppressed many particulars, with which De l'Avignon was already acquainted, necessary to the connection of the leading facts, it will be proper to relate the unfortunate Miss Conway's story in other words.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

We come into the world only to die in sorrow; we gain a little that we may lose it with tears; we engage our hearts only that those hearts may break.

SCHILLER.

THE late Marquis de Bellefonde had a sister many years older than himself; who, in the year 1739, quitted France with her husband, a Venetian nobleman; who was, at the time she married him at Paris, on a secret embassy from the state of Venice.

The negociation had proved unsuccessful; and Count Adonio was on his return to Venice, charged with the blame of

of that failure, and accused of having employed false representations against the state by whom he had been delegated; and, though his accusers could bring forward against him no proof sufficient for conviction, they threw a stigma on his character which could not be wiped away, and he was dismissed from office by the senate in a manner the most disgraceful and wounding to a haughty mind.

Disgusted by treatment which he thought he had little merited, yet too proud to hazard an appeal to justice, or demand a confrontation with his accusers, he immediately collected all his effects which could be converted into ready money, and, determining to withdraw himself for ever from the scene of his disgrace, set sail for Great Britain; whither he was invited by the inducement of an only sister having settled in England some years before.

Of a sullen and vindictive temper, Count Adonio however soon found that change of scene could not change the memory of the past; and his haughty and unbending spirit glowed with the same rancorous thirst of vengeance in England as in Venice. Pride and revenge were the leading features of his soul:—to them every other passion, every other feeling, every other motive, was subordinate: the former had received a rankling stab; the latter, a jealous champion, could not remain inactive. The first impulse of pride led him to treat his enemies with disdain; but with time and reflection his impetuosity returned. He had exiled himself from his native city, and become a ruined wanderer, he said, while his enemies lived secure and happy; they supposed him actuated by mean fears; they exulted in having caused his alienation, and triumphed in his tame submission.

 There

There was phrenzy in the thought! The scorpions of anger and revenge fed upon his heart, and without communicating his design to his wife, whom he left in his sister's house, and recommended to the protection of her husband, the Earl of Wallingford, he privately set sail for Venice, arrived without noise, dismissed his attendants, and rested not till he had plunged his hidden dagger in the breast of him whom he suspected as the prime author of his disgrace.

But the blind impetuosity of passion, and the exultation of revenge, stripped him of after-caution; he was detected, and punished with immediate death, before he had even time to apprise his friends of his wife's retreat, or to write to her a last farewell.

His estates were confiscated: and the unfortunate widow was left in a foreign land, with a provision very inadequate to support

port her long in her accustomed affluence, ignorant of her husband's fate, distracted by his mysterious absence, and vainly from day to day hoping his return. To the repeated letters she had addressed to him at Venice, (where she soon suspected he was gone,) finding that she could obtain no answer, and almost frantic with grief and anxiety, she formed the desperate resolution of setting out in quest of him herself. No arguments could dissuade her from this rash undertaking; the pleadings of maternal tenderness were silenced by the superior call of affection for her husband and terror for his fate; and, leaving her almost new-born daughter to the care of those friends of her husband who had afforded *her* an asylum, she followed him,—she shared his fate!

The rumour of his death met her at Bologna; and the manner of it was communicated to her incautiously, by a person who was ignorant of her near interest in

in it, with every circumstance which could aggravate such a blow. Fatigue of body and long agitation of mind had rendered her too feeble to bear up under it. She was attacked by a malignant fever, which in less than a week terminated her existence. Some hours before her death she was sensible of her approaching fate; and, anxious for the preservation of her child, she employed the last remnant of strength and recollection in writing a letter to the Countess of Wallingford; wherein, in the most earnest and pathetic language, she conjured her to be a mother to her child: she also requested that she would break the tidings of her death to her own family in France; and with calm fortitude gave directions to those about her, that her remains should be conveyed to Venice, and interred in the monastry where the ancestors of Count Adonio slept. Her servants faithfully executed her dying behests, and Lady Wallingford was, while she lived, a mother to her child; but *her* death

death soon followed, and the young Angelica, though still retained in the Earl's family, in a short time feelingly experienced that she was an orphan and a dependent. She grew up, however, with all her mother's beauty and attractions; and the Earl's youngest son, the honorable Mr. Conway, too sensible of her charms, eagerly sought his father's permission to be united to her. Educated together and endeared to each other from childhood, the wish was mutual; and when the Earl peremptorily forbade their union, the infatuated lovers took refuge from his authority in flight, and were privately married in an obscure retirement, which the exasperated Earl's returning kindness never enabled them to leave. He died a few years afterwards, mentioning his disobedient son in his will only to perpetuate his vengeance, by solemnly adjuring his successor never to acknowledge him as a brother, nor receive him again into the family which he

had

had disgraced by marrying the daughter of a proscribed foreigner and a beggar.

The new Earl of Wallingford, though more relenting than his father, was equally haughty; and, though he took upon him to set aside the unnatural sentence, and offered his brother a small provision sufficient to keep him above want, it was in a manner so unconciliatory, that Mr. Conway would not stoop to accept of it; and with desperate resolution determined rather to brave the worst incroachments of poverty than be indebted to his brother for a humiliating kindness. His own pride was not less his enemy than his father's or his brother's.

Pining away the spring of his youth in an inactive and inglorious retirement, while his talents languished for employment, and his spirit burned to enter the lists of fame, he became first morose, and

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at length frantic! He died by his own hand; and his unhappy wife could not survive the blow. They left two orphan-daughters, the eldest of whom was not quite five years old. Lady Anne Conway, an elder sister of their father's, immediately took them into her own protection, and determined to educate them herself. Lady Anne had another motive for this act of mercy, more powerful than any other regard which she felt for the memory of their father.

She was a rigid devotee to the Romish church, and was unwilling that children so nearly allied to her should be perverted to the doctrines of *heresy*, by falling into the hands of their Protestant relations, while it was in her power to signalize her religious zeal by saving them. Lady Anne was one of those characters, of a weak mind and strong passions, on whom the influence of religion produces alternately the gloom

gloom of superstition and the visionary raptures of enthusiasm.

Her natural dispositions were humane, and her intentions usually good; but bigotry and prejudice restricted the exercise of the former, and often gave a wrong bias to her best motives. A life of celibacy was her choice, and she was only deterred from retiring to spend her days in the French convent where she had received the first impressions of that religion which she had afterwards embraced, by the ardent desire she felt to disseminate among her friends those doctrines which she believed were necessary to their eternal welfare.

The repeated disappointments which had followed all her exertions of this nature, and the opposition her opinions met with from those whom she was so zealous to serve, were represented to her by her Catholic friends as trials of her faith and constancy,

stancy, which were purposely thrown in her way, and which it would be glory to surmount. Buoyed up by ideas like these, and more and more infatuated with the ritual parade and mysterious solemnity which attend the functions of the Romish church, she observed in her discharge of them the most scrupulous and undeviating exactness. Looking with mingled scorn and pity on those stubborn spirits of her own family who refused to yield to her converting counsels, she withdrew herself from them entirely, and lived in a house of her own, which had been particularly bequeathed to her by her father; whither she conducted the children of her unfortunate brother, the moment she heard that their parents were no more.

The Marquis de Bellefonde, who was their nearest surviving relation by the maternal side, was so little acquainted with Mrs. Conway's fate, that he was equally a stranger

a stranger to her marriage and death. He had only heard, in general terms, that she was provided for by her father's sister, the Countess of Wallingford; and had never exerted himself to inquire farther: Lady Anne's design, therefore, met no opposition from *him*; and Lord Wallingford, whose love of splendor and unwillingness to encumber himself by providing for his brother's children easily overcame whatever religious scruples he might have entertained, seemed rejoiced that he was freed from them without incuring the stigma of having refused his assistance.

Lady Anne, thus fortunate in the success of her first effort in their behalf, rejoiced to think that the period was at hand when she should have it in her power to shew the world the fruits of her active as well as theoretical piety, in the education of these adopted children, whom she regarded as lambs

snatched

snatched from impending slaughter. To avoid the contaminating influence of those whose relationship to her protégées gave them a right to question their principles, which might one day be insiduously employed to the utter subversion of all her cares, she, as soon as the young ladies had attained an age when such contamination might prove dangerous, removed with them to the neighbourhood of York, which was at a distance from all her former connections; and now devoted her whole time and thoughts to finish and confirm their religious education. Their young minds were filled with all the terrors of superstition, all the erroneous and contracted sentiments of bigotry and intoleration; while the self-approving author of these mistakes, finding her work proceed with undisturbed and fertile progress, became more and more enthusiastic in her own opinions, and more severe and uncandid in her judgement on those of others. Among the few

who

who were qualified to be admitted into her society, and allowed to converse with her nieces, a Mrs. Selwyn was alone distinguished by her friendship. She was a rigid adherent to the Romish persuasion, and was, like Lady Anne Conway, engaged in the meritorious task of saving souls, with no abilities for the arduous undertaking superior to those of her friend. The chief object of her well-meant though erroneous exertions was a nephew, the son of her second brother; who, being allied to nobility, with but a slender income to support his pretensions to birth and educate a numerous family, had been persuaded to yield his eldest son's spiritual concerns to her guidance, in order to secure for him the large temporal inheritance which she offered (on this condition) to bequeath to him at her death; and Henry Fitzwilliam, at twelve years of age, had been placed under her care, and instructed to pay her the respect and obedience of a son. When his father,

father, however, consigned him to Mrs. Selwyn's guidance, he saw much less danger to be apprehended from her powers of conversion than the good lady herself imagined; for at the time when she was seized with the desire of bringing over Henry to her opinions, the boy was not only very well instructed in the doctrines of the Protestant faith, but possessed faculties which distinguished between truth and error with an uncommon vigor for so early an age; and, by having a singular taste for the study of divinity, he had armed himself with weapons which Mr. Fitzwilliam knew would sufficiently defend him from receiving any durable impression from his aunt's erroneous tenets, although he might be perverted to a temporary wandering of belief. It was the knowledge of his superior abilities, rather than his right of primogeniture, which had induced Mrs. Selwyn, on examing her brother's family, to single out Henry as the subject of her ghostly

ghostly patronage. She considered that it would be doubly meritorious to subdue a spirit so wayward, assisted by such talents of opposition; and the greater obstacles she met with from his arch and perplexing questions, the more obstinately eager she became to accomplish his conversion. Passion was called in when her reasoning powers failed to convince him; and Henry, being fully persuaded that his corporeal interests would suffer by attempting to hold out against this holy sage, with the docility natural to his age in such cases, soon learned to accommodate his opinions to his situation, and allowed Mrs. Selwyn to triumph in her victory.

The similarity of circumstances, which rendered them alike in their doctrines of faith, their sentiments, and their pursuits, greatly strengthened the intimacy between Mrs. Selwyn and Lady Anne Conway. This had been commenced

many

many years before, during the life-time of Mrs. Selwyn's husband, (who resided in the neighbourhood of Conway Castle, in Hampshire,) and was considered beneficial and pleasing by both; as they were mutually assisting to stimulate each other's zeal in the promotion of their religion, and mutually complimentary on their separate claims to the peculiar favor of heaven, for the meritorious redemption of their protégées.

Young Fitzwilliam was destined by them as the husband of one of the fair orphans; but the power of election between them was left to himself: and Mrs. Selwyn soon observed with pleasure, that her favorite Maria was already the object of his preference.

Maria was of a character very opposite to her sister's; she was firm, ardent, enterprising; possessed of uncommon intellectual endowments, and that

 lofty

lofty air of conscious superiority, which rendered her less interesting than the bashful unassuming Angelica, although she was perhaps more estimable; for solid principle was the basis of all her actions, and truth and justice the objects of her anxious inquiry. Angelica, on the contrary, was the child of prejudice; contented to remain in error rather than exert herself to detect it; and willing to follow the councils of others rather than hazard the possible fallacy of her own decisions. Her heart was by nature extremely amiable; but, as she knew not how to regulate her feelings, her sensibility was often the effect of weakness, and her best intentions often proved abortive from the same imbecility which unfitted her for carrying them into effect. She was, however, exquisitely beautiful, without discovering the slightest movement of personal vanity; and her gentleness and humility, still more than her singular loveliness, irresistibly engaged the affections of

of all who saw her. Fitzwilliam acknowledged her superior beauty, and loved her as a sister; but *mind* was the object of his predilection, and Maria fixed his choice.

Of a studious and speculative turn of mind, he did not, however, once think of love, until his aunt's death put him in possession of an ample fortune, and full liberty to dispose of himself as he chose, both in regard to his worldly and spiritual concerns: for, in order to prove the efficacy of her doctrines and the force of her own reasonings, she had determined to bind him by no conditional engagement which might influence free will, and give her enemies occasion to attribute that constancy to his faith, which she doubted not but reason would continue him in rather than the more powerful inducements of love or mammon. Fitzwilliam, in whom the early impression of the religion of his father had never been radically

cally effaced, and who, as his judgement expanded, had discovered innumerable offensive tenets in that which circumstances had compelled him to adopt, no sooner found himself empowered to examine and reject than he eagerly began the work of inquiry which had long engrossed his wishes; and in a short time the crucifix and rosary were discarded, the sacred volume of revealed faith studiously examined, and the visions of Romish superstition gave way to the clear and practical doctrines of Protestantism. This work effected, and the anarchy of warring opinions and unsatisfied doubts hushed to rest, he now turned his thoughts towards the engaging companions of his early solitude, to whom he longed to impart that internal satisfaction which was the result of his own inquiries after truth. Maria, who was the eldest, had at this time completed her nineteenth year, and Angelica was only two years younger; the former possessed every intellectual endowment

dowment that could command the preference of judgement; the latter, every interesting charm that could engage the heart; but Fitzwilliam's choice was already determined, and maturer reason confirmed the prepossession of his earlier years.

After an absence of six months, which at his aunt's decease he had devoted to visiting his family, from whom, during her life-time, he was wholly alienated, he returned to York, and flew to embrace them with mingled eagerness and timidity.

Lady Anne, ignorant of his recantation, received him with her accustomed welcome, and flattered herself that the completion of her favorite matrimonial scheme was not far distant; which had acquired additional consequence from the elegant affluence it would now confer on one

one of her nieces; both of whom she loved with a fondness truly maternal.

Fitzwilliam, who had, during his absence, examined the nature and proved the force of his attachment to Maria, now anxiously sought an opportunity of discovering, whether he might flatter himself with a favorable reception of the declaration he wished to make, or whether there was a probability of overcoming the scruples of her early faith.

With the unguarded eagerness of youth, he was not long in disclosing his lately-adopted opinions, which he did in the presence of both the sisters; and, unfortunately for him, the candor he expected from Maria was checked in its first movements by the fears of her sister; who, shocked and alarmed to hear him, in whom they had so long confided, uttering sentiments so obnoxious to that faith of which she was persuaded, flew to her aunt,

aunt, and, communicating what she had heard, besought her to exert her influence to stop the progress of his dangerous infidelity.

Lady Anne immediately demanded a private conference with Fitzwilliam; and, as he was too sincere and independent to hide his principles, the result of it was, his interdiction from all farther intercourse with any of the members of her family. This was a stroke which, though his long acquaintance with her implacable bigotry had taught him to dread, his love for Maria rendered insupportable, and he returned to his late aunt's house in the deepest dejection; more than ever sensible, by the danger of losing her for ever, of the fair orphan's interest in his heart. Unable to gain admittance to her presence, yet now more fondly attached to the scenes endeared to him by the remembrance of her undisturbed society in the days of happy childhood, he

could not tear himself away from them, nor resolve to abandon a pursuit which promised nothing but disappointment.

Lady Anne, alarmed by having in her neighbourhood one who had attempted to overturn the labours of her most anxious years, became daily more uneasy at his stay, and more watchful over the conduct of her nieces.—She discovered with pleasure, that, though they regretted Fitzwilliam as a friend whom they had long loved, neither of them seemed to entertain more than a sisterly regard for him, and that they both joined in lamenting his apostacy with unfeigned sincerity; but still he was near them; she knew his partiality to Maria, and once intercepted a letter which he had contrived to convey privately to her chamber. A spirit so enterprising as his, she thought, was not to be deterred by a first repulse, and his remaining in the neighbourhood kept alive a strong suspicion that his designs were not relinquished:

relinquished.—could he find means to obtain a second hearing, their friendship for him, and the pain of being debarred his his society, would give greater persuasion to his principles than even the dangerous sophistry of his arguments.

She had long meditated a journey to France, in order to present them to her friend, the Abbess of St. Etienne; who, in case of her death before they should be provided for by marriage, was to receive them into her protection: and she now, notwithstanding the declining state of her health, determined to adopt this expedient, as the best resource against their religious seduction.

They went first to Versailles, which was within a few leagues of St. Etienne; and here Lady Anne, meeting with some of her old convent-acquaintances, consented to remain some time.

One day the Marquis de Bellefonde accidentally saw his nieces, and hearing their name, he was immediately struck by the resemblance which Angelica bore to his lamented sister, and made inquiries which discovered their relationship to him.

He waited on Lady Anne, and cordially invited them to take up their residence in his house. Lady Anne, who was ignorant that his creed differed from the prevailing religion of the country, and who was flattered by his kindness, readily accepted the invitation for her nieces, a portion of whose time she thought he was entitled to demand; but, having previously engaged herself to spend a few weeks with an intimate friend, she only accompanied them to the hôtel de Bellefonde, and then left them under the protection of the Marquis and his niece, the young Marchioness d'Estreaux; who had resided with him since the death of his wife, her husband

band being at this time abroad with his regiment.

Lady Anne soon learned, with considerable uneasiness, that the whole family were Protestants; and, on this information, she immediately returned to the hôtel de Bellefonde, and desired to have her nieces with herself, imparting her reasons for this abrupt change to the Marquis. She informed him, that, as she had nothing to leave them at her death, it was her design, should they remain unmarried, that they should both take the veil: and to fit them for this, which would most probably be their lot, she thought it was best to prevent their forming attachments hostile to the interests of their religion.

The Marquis, however, insisted on retaining them some time longer. They were both much admired; and he represented to Lady Anne, with friendly zeal, that it would be the height of injustice to

move them from their present situation, where they might have some opportunities of marrying advantageously, and to members of their own church; he solemnly assured her, that she had nothing to fear from his interference with their religious principles; and Lady Anne, though dissatisfied, could not reasonably oppose him farther, but consented to their remaining with the Marquis another month.

It was in this interval, that the young Vicomte de Rosier received the first impressions of that unfortunate attachment which continued to embitter his happiness through life. He had formed a romantic standard of female excellence; and he then, like Pygmalion, fell in love with the work of his own hands; he had long sought in vain to find some living soul to animate it, or some living form to compare it to: but it was a creation wholly unlike the Gallic belles, or indeed any set of belles that the "world e'er saw;" and De Rosier

was

was beginning to despair of ever realizing the image which his fancy doated on, when Angelica Conway appeared, and was instantly hailed as the informing spirit who had long filled his reveries. Her manners were exactly formed after his model of female attraction,—mild, timid, unobtrusive, refined without art, and exquisitely graceful, though bashful to excess.

Her beauty has already been mentioned. De Rosier thought he had never beheld any thing so lovely, never imagined any form so interesting; but it was not till his departure for St. Etienne that he became sensible of the extent of his passion; when he could no longer gaze upon her beauties, nor listen to the touching harmony of her voice, whose silver sounds could take his "prisoned soul and lap it in Elyzium." Acquainted as he was with the difference of their faith, and the insurmountable barrier which Lady Anne's bigotry placed between

between Angelica and him, he however strove not to banish the dangerous prepossession. "My love shall never injure her," he would say; "and to me it is the life of existence; why then should I seek to repress a sentiment so delightful, because all my wishes are not fortunate? why cast away a visionary happiness, because I am denied a real one?" With such sophistries De Rosier silenced the remonstrances of reason, till reason would no longer interpose; and only a week had elapsed from the time when he bade her adieu, in the assurance that he should see her no more, when, under the sanction of consanguinity, he introduced himself at the convent de St. Etienne, and requested an interview with his fair cousins.

They had just parted with Lady Anne, whom a letter from Lord Wallingford had hastily recalled to England; and he found them under the pressure of the first regrets of separation: but, in the rapid blush which

which overspread Angelica's cheek, De Rosier thought he read something more than the confusion at being surprised in tears; and, when she recovered from her emotions, the grief of her late parting seemed to yield to a pleasure which she could not dissemble.

They told him in friendly confidence Lady Anne's reasons for leaving them behind her; and Angelica said artlessly, that there was something that gave her much pleasure in the idea of being still in France. "And why so?" De Rosier inquired. "Because," she replied, slightly blushing, "it is delightful to be near relations who love one. In England Lady Anne is my only friend; in France I have many, at least I *think* so; and indeed, *mon cousin*, (as he had instructed her to call him,) to *think* a happiness is almost as good as to possess it." "So I have heard," said De Rosier, endeavouring to smile: "would to heaven I could think so! But

But what has taught *you* such a lesson?" "I am only at present *endeavouring* to learn it," replied Angelica. "Though I spoke so confidently, (continued she, after a moment's pause,) "ah! mon cousin, (and her eyes filled with tears,) there is no delusion of thought can make up for being parted from those we love for ever!" "But surely that will not be your fate?" said De Rosier with wild earnestness. "Oh! yes, I fear but too surely!" she answered, and a convulsive shudder accompanied her words.

Though there was nothing in her entertaining such an apprehension that could create surprise, as De Rosier had always known her aunt's wish that she should take the veil, and had till now understood that it was a life she herself desired; it seemed at this moment an idea so fraught with horror to him, that he found himself quite unable to continue the subject: but there was a latent hope for him,

couched

couched under her reluctance, which he did not fail to extract; and he hastened home to ruminate upon it. A very short time, however, convinced him of the fallacy of his reasonings, in regard to the innocency of indulging a passion such as his, under the notion that it could be confined to mere Platonism; and his next interview with Angelica fully disclosed to him the state of her heart.

While the sisters resided at the hôtel de Bellefonde, they were one day busied in twisting some hair-rings, which they intended to distribute as parting gifts among the young ladies who had visited them there; and Maria, saying that shehad long coveted a lock of her cousin Theodore's hair for that purpose, rose with quickness from her seat, and, before he was well aware of her design, her scissars had committed a theft on an auburn curl, which occupied a conspicuous place on his finely-arched forehead.

Affecting

Affecting great wrath, he insisted on her restoring it; and a long chase round the room ensued, in which both parties were baffled; for the contested lock had made its escape during the engagement, and was no where to be found. It was not, however, snatched up to the skies, as legends relate of other illustrious locks; but had privately stolen a passage into Angelica's pocket-book, where it lived some time unknown to fame, and forgotten by the late disputants. Angelica had thought it such *lovely hair*, that she wished to make a ring of it herself; but she knew that were she to ask her sister for some of it, it would not be granted; or "perhaps Maria might imagine that she only admired it for the sake of her cousin:" when, therefore, in assisting Maria to retain it, accident had put it into her possession without any one observing its destiny, she could not prevail on herself to restore or confess that she had it,

although

although she felt she knew not what of conscious impropriety in detaining it.

In its present form, however, it might lead to an alarming discovery, which she had not ventured yet to make even to herself; and the first time she could escape from the observation of her sister, after their arrival at St. Etienne, she retired to a little summer-house in the garden, where, shutting herself up, she soon completed a ring like the others she had made; but finished with more elegant taste than any she had attempted before. She was just preparing to deposit the implements of her ingenuity in her work-bag, when her sister tapped at the door of the summer-house, and summoned her to come and see Theodore de Rosier, who was waiting in the parlour. "O my dear sister!" cried she, in a flutter of joy and surprise, "do come and put up my work-bag for me, while I run and change this tawdry cap!"—and, quite forgetful of her late caution, she

she hurried away towards the cloisters, leaving the eventful ring only slightly wrapped in a piece of white paper; while on the bench laid the remainder of the hair in full view, and all around the symbols of the work she had been engaged in.

She had no sooner reached the door of her apartment, than, recollecting her negligence, she returned with a beating heart towards the summer-house, where she met Maria with the work-bag in her hand, hastening to the parlour. "O Maria!" cried she, blushing deeply, and attempting to take it from her, "have you seen the foolish ring?" "I have seen nothing," replied Maria, enjoying her confusion, "but a new specimen of my little demure sister's good taste, and I am going to ask De Rosier's opinion of it." "Surely you will not be so cruel!" cried she, again making a fruitless effort to regain the work-bag. "Nay," rejoined her sister, there

there will be no cruelty in the proceeding; for I am persuaded De Rosier will admire the device as much as I do."—They now entered the parlour together, and, though one of the lay-sisters was present, Maria gaily and thoughtlessly held up the work-bag to De Rosier, and told him there was something in it that would amuse him. "Where do you think," cried she, "I discovered the fugitive lock of hair which you and I fought so long about, but shut up in the summer-house with Angelica, where she was chanting her matins over it?" Angelica's countenance changed its hue every moment; but shame and agitation kept her silent, while pride alone restrained the tears that gathered in her eyes. "But you have not seen all yet;" cried Maria, taking out the parcel that contained the ring. It was already in De Rosier's hands, and he was eagerly unfolding the paper with various emotions, when Angelica caught his arm. "For heaven's sake, for pity's sake, De Rosier, do not

not open it!"—and the tears, which she could no longer withhold, rushed in torrents from her eyes.

De Rosier stood a moment irresolute; but hope kindled in his bosom. Anxiety to ascertain the cause of emotions, in which his heart whispered him he bore no inconsiderable part, overcame the momentary anguish of distressing her, and he glanced his eye upon the paper.—Maria, who perceived that something more than she had at first suspected must have occasioned her sister's violent and unusual agitation, now interposed, and, accusing herself as the cause of giving her so much pain, intreated De Rosier to desist from reading the writing on the inside of the paper, which, in her eagerness to examine the ring, she had wholly overlooked. He, however, in the hasty moment which was snatched from their importunities, had seen enough to confirm the suggestions of hope;—it was a simple sentence,

sentence, strongly expressive of the artless tenderness of the writer. "My dear dear cousin Theodore's hair; but I need not *this* to remind me of him!" It carried rapture to De Rosier's heart; but with the utmost self-command he affected ignorance of it, and succeeded so well, that Angelica was soon persuaded that he really had not seen it, as it had been written with a pencil, and was, very probably, she thought, too faint to be read at so slight a glance as he could have given it.

Tranquillity was in a great measure restored, though Angelica could not check the deep-mantling blushes which rushed, like wave after wave, upon her cheeks every time she thought of the ring, or looked at De Rosier: and he, perceiving that every word he uttered only increased her embarrassment, and needing no further confirmation of the secret of her heart, took an early leave of his cousins; eager to indulge the promises of hope in secret,

and

and to think over, without restraint, the scene so flattering to his wishes, of which he had been a witness. He soon imparted to his friend De l'Avignon the discovery he had made; and De l'Avignon, who thought it his interest to flatter his delusions, drew from thence the most favourable presages, and encouraged him in the design to which they gave birth,—of immediately declaring his sentiments to Angelica, and endeavouring to engage her hand privately, until he could fix on some scheme for making her his, independently of her aunt's concurrence, which he knew too well he should never be able to obtain. He did so. Angelica would not promise; but she was too artless to evade his questions: she could not think that there was any thing wrong in confessing her partiality for him; but she delivered the secret reluctantly: she knew that the difference of their religion precluded her ever gaining her aunt's consent to their union; and, without it, she could not think

think of determining: "but why, she thought, might not De Rosier be contented with her friendship; for her own part, she was as happy, in the assurance of being beloved by him, as if united to him in the closest bonds."—She soon found, however, that she was *not happy*. Tears would often steal silently down her cheeks before she knew why she wept; and sighs that were laden with heavy anxiety would breathe forth in spite of her efforts to repress them, even while De Rosier sat beside her.

He saw her struggles, and, reproaching himself as the cause of her unhappiness, almost lamented that he had ever invaded the peace of her innocent bosom, by awakening in it sentiments which he was soon convinced could never be reconciled with her present notions of duty; and which he could not even wish her to yield to, (when he allowed himself a moment's serious reflection,) at the expence of that

pure integrity of heart which made her shudder at the thoughts of disobedience or ingratitude to her aunt, as well as of violating the prejudices of her religion. But his error was committed, and he saw no remedy but by subverting in her mind those religious principles in opposition to him, which, dear to her from infancy, had hitherto been held sacred by him. "When these are surmounted," thought he, "Angelica can alone be happy; for she will then see none of those obstacles which she is now studious to raise against herself and me. She will despise the prejudice which would confine the favor of heaven to any one religious sect; and she will learn that the dictates of nature and of reason cannot approve of a life of reluctant celibacy. His acquaintance with the refinements of theological argument was but limited; but his notions of revealed faith, and reliance on the practical superiority of the Protestant doctrines, were clear and decisive.

He

He applied himself assiduously to the study of the former; and, as he examined the different grounds of reasoning of the controversial authors he read, his anxiety for Angelica's conversion became more urgent and disinterested. At length a favorable opportunity presented itself for the commencement of this important undertaking, on the success of which, he had now persuaded himself, Angelica's real happiness and interest depended equally with his own: and with such a motive to animate his words, his arguments wore all the eloquent and impressive energy of conviction.

Angelica could not refute them: they affected her heart, but they could not shake the obstinate rigor of prejudices, which, stamped on her mind by a woman whom she had been accustomed to venerate, and rendered binding by every motive of terror and mysterious awe acting upon a nature of such gentleness and timidity,

timidity, were too deeply inrooted to yield even to the united force of the tenderest affection and the most persuasive truth. She was even hurt that he could imagine her capable of renouncing principles she had so long reverenced; and reproached him for wounding her ears with doctrines so pernicious to her own, with as much resentment as her meek spirit could express.

De Rosier was shocked and astonished by the inflexibility of her bigotry. There was an uncandid asperity in it, he thought, of which he had never before believed her capable; and it was not so much her words as the manner in which they were spoken, the eagerness with which she had interrupted him, and the air of real anger, altogether new to her, which animated her features as she chid him, that put a stop for the present to the conversation he had begun. But Maria, who was present, and whom he had wished to be equally

equally a sharer of his counsels, had listened with far different feelings. She had only once before heard her religion disputed; but it was by a man for whose judgement she had the highest respect, and who, she thought, even while she condemned him, must have received very forcible reasons for altering his faith. When she now heard De Rosier, whom she also highly esteemed, pursuing the same train of argument with still-greater powers of elocution, and apparently a still-warmer interest, her heart justified the apostacy of Fitzwilliam; and some doubts, on certain points of the Romish creed, which had of late perplexed her reason, returned to her mind with an alarming urgency; and, in the first movements of wavering opinion, she fervently lamented that she had listened even for a moment to De Rosier's words.

When he took his leave, Angelica shed some tears over his errors; perhaps min-

 gled

gled with sorrow to find him so widely distant from the only means through which she durst ever think of being united to him ; but Maria was labouring against a tempestuous tide of doubt, fear, and regret, which tears could not soothe, nor reflection extricate her from. Since her conversation with Mr. Fitzwilliam, her mind had daily been expanding. She had visited other scenes; she had conversed with a variety of different characters, and had heard new sentiments, which, in the solitude where she had passed her early days, were unheard of and unconceived.

The respectful air with which the first impressions of religion had been delivered to her, and the veneration in which Lady Anne had always directed her to hold every thing connected with it, had hitherto restrained her thoughts from dwelling on inquiries that were deemed presumptuous.

This

This veil of respect, of involuntary awe, had been forcibly and suddenly drawn aside by De Rosier: she had heard religion contemptuously spoken of, and she could not recover that sacred deference in regard to it which had till now repressed the suggestions of disbelief.

Perplexed and agitated, she passed the remainder of the day, which was succeeded by a sleepless night, at one time reproaching herself for having given admittance to doubt; at another, longing that her doubts might be confirmed; but next morning this contention between inquiry and error was suspended by other thoughts.

The Abbess, displeased and offended by the frequency of De Rosier's visits, had often represented to the Miss Conways the impropriety of admitting them. Maria, conscious of no impropriety in her heart, and at this time too little acquainted with the despotic

despotic customs of the world to consult appearances when her heart acquitted her; perhaps, tinctured with that pride of self-government, which in youth usually accompanies a consciousness of superior understanding, only smiled at her objections, and continued to welcome and repeat her invitations to her cousin; and Angelica, whose heart acquiesced in this liberty, and who had been always accustomed to yield to the guidance of her sister, was not likely to oppose her in this instance. As they were only boarders, and the general rules of the convent remarkably lenient, the Abbess had of herself little right to impose particular restrictions on the Miss Conways; but, still more offended by their repeated disregard of her advice, she had written to their aunt on the subject, and represented the visits and assiduities of De Rosier in the most dangerous light, entreating her to send an order to forbid his future attendance at the convent; which, she said,

not

not only infringed the laws of decorum, but tended to wean their hearts from that holy solitude to which she had frequently desired that they should dedicate themselves.

These representations were more than would have been sufficient to induce the requested prohibition, had Lady Anne been capable of attending to them: but the Abbess's letter found her still at Lord Wallingford's house, where she had been detained by a malignant disorder; which, heightened by the terrors that superstition gave to the approach of death, had bewildered her reason.—Two months elapsed without bringing any answer; and Maria and Angelica had written repeatedly, alarmed by the unusual length of her silence, and anxiously inquiring its cause; when, on the morning after their last interview with De Rosier, two letters were delivered to the Abbess from Lady

 Anne,

Anne, one of which was addressed jointly to the two Miss Conways.

It contained a relation of the deplorable cause which had interrupted her correspondence with them, and informed them that she had not many days to live; that, as it had pleased heaven to restore her to recollection, she would fain have indulged herself with seeing her beloved children once more: but the dangers to which they might be exposed, by being perhaps suddenly left among strangers and enemies to their holy faith, had determined her against taking them from their present happy and secure asylum, which, she hoped, choice, as well as duty, would render agreeable to them; for *there* she wished them to spend their days, and had written to the Abbess to that effect. "To Angelica in particular," said she, "I would enforce the superiority of a monastic life: my heart bleeds with peculiar anguish, when the possibility

possibility of her returning to a world, which her timid sensibility and uncommon gentleness so ill qualify her for encountering, presents itself. I need not entreat my Maria to strengthen, by her superior firmness, the resolutions of her sister, and to be to Angelica the guardian and the counsellor she must soon lose in me. As soon as you have entered upon your noviciate, (continued she, after reproving them for having admitted De Rosier's visits, and recommending them to begin their probation immediately,) let me hear that you are worthy of my dying blessing, by a cheerful acquiescence in my wishes, which only on this condition can be yours; and, in the mean time, as a pledge of your entire obedience, you must immediately forbid the visits of your cousin the Vicomte de Rosier, and promise to see him no more.

"The fallacy of his sophisms, (which I fear he has exercised upon you,) you are

perhaps too young or inexperienced to detect; but you may rely on the assurance of one who has ever had your eternal, as well as temporal, interests at heart, that both will be best secured by renouncing a world, against the dangers and calamities of which you will soon have no protector. Let me also stimulate your obedience, by the remembrance of those ties of gratitude which ought to bind you to a scrupulous observance of my last commands. I have acted to you both the part of a tender and vigilant parent. To defend you from the influence of heresy, I abandoned the friends and companions of my youth; to preserve you from the seductions of active life, I buried myself with you in solitude and seclusion: I have loved you with the tenderness of maternal solicitude; I have lived for you alone! Can you then poison the comfort of my few remaining moments, by inflicting the agonizing apprehensions which must accompany the

reflection

reflection of leaving you unsecured against the perils and deceptions of this illusive world? can you consent to add bitterness to death?"

Alas! neither the love which the innocent Angelica now felt in all its force for him whom she was commanded to renounce for ever, nor the superior steadiness of her sister, could enable them to resist this appeal to the gratitude of their natures.

They both loved Lady Anne with filial affection; they heard the tidings of her approaching death with the bitterest affliction. Their hearts revolted against ingratitude to her whom they were about to lose, and who they believed had indeed made sacrifices to their welfare which they could never rate too highly. The doubts, which had so lately disturbed Maria's faith, vanished before the remonstrance

monstrances of filial duty. They had weakened her belief, without destroying the dominion of early prejudice; which now returned upon her with higher claims, rendered sacred by the idea that she who urged them would soon be past the power of questioning her obedience. Angelica felt no doubts to weaken *her* acquiescence. She had never hoped to *marry* De Rosier; and she knew that at her aunt's death she must be left destitute and unprotected.

A life of quiet and seclusion had always been best suited to her retired disposition; and, although she felt the shock of being separated for ever from De Rosier like the parting of the vital spirit, she made no complaints against the severity of a destiny which she believed inevitable. She immediately dispatched a short and melancholy billet, carrying, as she thought, her eternal adieu to the

astonished

astonished and agonized De Rosier; and on the following morning began with Maria the year of her noviciation.

CHAP. VI.

There superstition doats on what it dreads!

AGNES MORLEY.

A Very short time evinced, that the delightful calm, which a life of voluntary seclusion and abstract devotion had promised to infuse into the minds of the young devotees, was equally a stranger to them both. The heart of Angelica was distracted by the image of De Rosier; which, contending against the errors of religious enthusiasm, delivered up her

her mind to an anarchy of warring sentiments, and corroded the vitals of health, by gradually undermining a constitution naturally weak. While Maria, in whom the once-awakened voice of inquiry had but been silenced for a time, found nothing in the parade of superstitious deception which she saw practised around her that could lessen her dislike of a life adverse to the feelings of her heart, and opposite to the most obvious dictates of nature and reason. Religious doubts, once implanted, especially in a young and active mind, are seldom silenced but by the adoption of a new faith. Those of Maria had lain dormant beneath the first strong impression of a more sensible duty; but, soon roused to fresh activity by her growing repugnance to the life she had embraced, they led her to a strenuous investigation of the doctrines which recommended such a sacrifice, and at length produced a decided rejection of them; having, however, no access to the opinions

opinions of those who might have prescribed proper limits to her inquiries, surrounded by the implicit votaries of superstition, and almost wholly ignorant of the true grounds of Christian faith, in renouncing the errors of Popery she found herself bewildered in a yet-wider field of doubt; and, forming her conclusions on its other tenets by analogy with those which her reason had abjured, the whole system of revealed religion became involved in her mistrust.

In a young and already-sophisticated mind, these doubts and inquiries prove too often what Shakespeare beautifully says of glory:

> ——— "like a circle in the water;
> "Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself,
> "Till by broad spreading it disperse to nought."

Maria, with all that strength of intellect which sustains the mind in independence, but with the diffidence of a heart

heart which, when rightly moulded, hesitates to decide on so sacred a subject as religion, felt, to her astonishment, the possibility of being unsatisfied, though fully emancipated from those mental fetters which superstition had imposed on prejudice.

There was a something within,—she knew not what, which sought for demonstration to confirm hope; a consciousness of still-remaining error, which, though she could not analyse *it* to herself, withheld her from imparting to her sister the revolution in her sentiments. Resolutely confirmed in her rejection of the delusive tenets of Popery, she knew not where to mark the intermediate boundaries of revealed faith; and, though the wanderings of her mind tended strongly towards Deism, she had not courage to own herself a Deist.

Thus

Thus situated, detesting the cruel sacrifices, and despising the credulity and imposition which she saw around her, she determined to appeal from her involuntary confinement, and to make an open avowal to the superior of the convent of her renunciation of the Romish creed. While she deliberated on the manner of effecting this important step with the least opposition, she was surprised by the appearance of Henry Fitzwilliam at St. Etienne, the object of whose journey confirmed her resolution.

He had lingered about the scenes which contained the object of his affection, in the vain hope of being able at some future time, when Lady Anne's suspicions should be lulled to sleep, to obtain a private interview with Maria, in order to declare his passion, and urge her consent to a clandestine union.

But their departure for France, in dissolving this hope, had left him a prey to the

the deepest regret. He returned to his father's house, and strove in vain to drown the remembrance of his disappointment in the new and attractive bustle of gaities and pursuits which had hitherto been unknown to him.

From an early period of childhood Maria Conway was mingled with all his recollections; and he could not look back on the days that werepassed without thinking of her. In this state of mind, the news had reached him of her having entered her noviciate.

'Till then a secret hope had, almost unknown to himself, cherished his love, and supported him under her absence, even while he believed himself striving to forget her: but, when he heard that the gloomy portals of superstition were about to close for ever on one so eminently fitted to adorn society; when he found himself on the point of being forever severed from her,

he could no longer deceive himself: he felt that she was necessary to his happiness, to his existence; and he formed the rash design of following her to the convent, and endeavouring to snatch her from impending destiny.

But a kind and indulgent father had marked the workings of his heart. Too liberal in his own opinions to disapprove of his son's attachment to Miss Conway on the score of her religion, and likewise sensible of her worth from the unanimous testimony of the few who knew her, *he* now stepped forward to espouse his cause, and aid him by his counsel. Knowing that nothing could be gained from Lady Anne's unconquerable bigotry, and foreseeing that her death must soon remove that obstacle which a premature disclosure of his son's wishes might render for ever insurmountable, he persuaded him to suspend his design while there was yet time to deliberate, and wait the issue of Lady Anne's

Anne's disorder, which was now rumoured to be hopeless.

In consequence of this advice, Fitzwilliam delayed his intention, and, about a month afterwards, Lady Anne's death left him at liberty to pursue his wishes.—The news of this, however, did not reach him for some time; and his departure was then delayed by several adverse circumstances; so that Maria was long ignorant of the happy intervention that awaited her; and, when he arrived at St. Etienne, he found *her* wrought up to a disposition the most favorable to his wishes, and the still more interesting Angelica sinking beneath the struggles of a deeply-rooted attachment, which her reason could not subdue, but which the errors of her judgement forbade.

Maria's fate was now determined. Long sensible of Fitwilliam's good qualities, though she had never been the slave of

romantic

romantic passion, gratitude now taught her the extent of that preference in his favor, to which, while ignorant of his sentiments, she had forbidden herself to yield. Without affecting a tardiness of consent, which the elevation of her mind and the urgency of her situation equally denied, she gave him her promise to become his as soon as the period of mourning for her aunt should have elapsed. It happened that in the early part of her correspondence with Lady Anne Conway, the Abbess had been informed of her intention in regard to uniting one of her nieces to Fitzwilliam, whom she represented as an amiable and steady devotee to the Romish church; and, being ignorant of his apostacy, which Lady Anne had not thought of mentioning during the short time they were together, she made no other opposition to his request, when he demanded her sanction to his marriage with Maria, than what was drawn from her aunt's last injunctions in favor

favor of her pursuing a monastic life. Fitzwilliam pleaded the priority of his claims; perhaps he used some artifices which love alone could excuse;—and Maria was permitted to leave the convent without being reduced to the necessity of making a public renunciation of that faith which her heart had rejected. At the request of the Marquis de Bellefonde's family, she took up her residence with them.

But, in proportion as she regained the enjoyment of that life from which her sister was excluded, she became more distressed by her separation from her; and, as she gained a clearer insight into the truths of revealed religion, she longed the more to make *her* a sharer of her conversion, and lamented the errors under which this beloved sister still laboured. She knew that the prejudices of their education had taken a much deeper hold of Angelica's mind than they had ever done

with herself, and foresaw all the obstacles which would arise to impede her change of faith; but her attachment to De Rosier, and affection for herself,—her only sister, and the companion of her happiest days,—would, she thought, when fully considered, prove inducements too powerful to be overcome by a nature so gentle and affectionate.

De Rosier's distraction at the thoughts of losing her likewise stimulated her ardor. Regarding Maria's interference as his last stake for happiness, he accompanied her himself to St. Etienne; where, without asking admittance to the presence of Angelica, he waited in the parlour with trembling anxiety;—while she, who found herself watched and followed by the eyes of suspicion, demanded a private conference with her sister: but, though the Abbess could produce no reasonable nor formal objection to the interview which Maria requested, and which she yielded to her with

reluctance, she had already provided against the consequences of such a meeting, (the object of which she began to suspect,) and had wrought so powerfully on the superstition of the too-timid Angelica, that, when Maria represented in the most animated language the errors in which they had been educated, and besought her even with tears to follow her example, in beginning that scrutiny which would convince her of these errors, she found her not only immoveable to her reasoning and intreaties, but penetrated with horror by the discovery of her apostacy. Maria then changed the ground of her arguments, and painted the world, and its attractions, in the most alluring colours. She recalled the happy hours spent in the society of De Rosier; and drew a lively picture of the anguish of disappointed hope. "Ah! Angelica," said she, "you have blasted the promises of life to him; you have withered the blossoms of his youth!—His ardent and energetic

getic mind, perverted by unconquerable affliction, must either sink the victim of despondency, or strike forth its energies on pursuits unworthy of him. A great soul, absorbed by passion, must either quench its fires, and lose its powers, or rush headlong on intemperance and ruin."

"Oh! say no more, my sister!" cried Angelica faintly: "my heart is breaking, but I cannot, I feel I must not, yield to your arguments." Involuntarily, however, she threw her arms round her sister's neck, and wept on her bosom, as if conscious that she was about to lose her best friend. Maria, considering this emotion as a favorable presage, earnestly renewed her entreaties. Angelica could only weep; and the melancholy monologue was interrupted by the entrance of the Abbess, before the former had made any decisive progress in weakening the influence of long-cherished bigotry. The Abbess, respectable even in error, advanced towards them, and extended her hand to the weep-

ing Angelica. Her mild pallid countenance, her dignified form, the expression of tender interest which overspread her noble and beautifully-turned features; the deep impressive tones of a voice exquisitely harmonious, and the air of solemn grandeur which the conventual robes served to heighten around her, all conspired to strengthen Angelica's delusion; and when the Abbess kindly embraced her, and applauded that resolution which she felt herself ill able to support, hastily drawing her veil over her face to hide her tears, she hurried out of the room, without even turning to receive her sister's adieu. Maria left the convent with an overcharged heart; but, whatever was the regret she felt in yielding up the conversion and relinquishing the society of this beloved friend, who had been the dearest companion of her youth, she determined no longer to combat principles which, however erroneous, were sacred to virtue. "That Being who presides over all

all hearts,' said she, " is too good to reject the offerings of sincerity; too just to involve the purity of the motive in the error of the sacrifice."

During the remainder of her stay in France, Maria visited her frequently; but renewed the subject no more, and studuously avoided speaking of De Rosier to her. He, in the mean time, far from yielding to the despondency she had predicted, was encouraged, by the pictures which she drew of her sister's unhappiness, to believe that hope was yet in store for him; and only suspended his measures, that he might gain room to deliberate on the means most likely to insure success.

Two months elapsed, however, without forwarding his designs. In that time he had seen Angelica only once; but from that short interview, which accident as well as stratagem had assisted him to procure, the vivid ardor of youthful hope

gathered fresh energy; for he saw in the extinguished lustre of her eyes a tender dejection, which the faint and compulsive smile she assumed was but ill calculated to conceal; and when he threw aside the disguise which had introduced him to her presence, the sudden burst of anguish and affection shook her frame almost to fainting, and her agitation spoke far less equivocally the sentiments which still ravaged her too feeling heart. Though this interview had been short and unproductive, he no longer doubted the success of his arguments, could he but find opportunity to lay them before her. Of future steps he had not thought: he knew that he should bring down upon himself the indignation of the convent by attempting to draw her from thence: he saw the impossibility of reconciling Angelica to a clandestine conduct; yet, obstinately determined that nothing but death should keep him apart from her, the sway of passion had overturned every other domination in

his

his mind; and he would have effected her liberation at the price of every sacrifice but her happiness, which he would not suffer himself to believe could be injured by any means of his.

Maria was united to Fitzwilliam at the house of the Marquis de Bellefonde, about four months after her departure from the convent; and the new married pair immediately set out for England, having first promised to revisit France at the expiration of Angelica's noviciate, in order to be present at the awful ceremony which was to place a last and irremoveable barrier between the fair mistaken enthusiast and those gayer scenes which, holding forth their most seductive charms, she had resolved to sacrifice to the call of imaginary duty.

The moment of Mrs. Fitzwilliam's departure De Rosier considered as the season best fitted to work upon the tenderness of

 Angelica's

Angelica's nature; and she had scarcely received her sister's adieus, when, under the disguise he had formerly assumed, he once more appeared before her at the grate of the convent; painted in the most impassioned language the violence of his unabated love, and conjured her to deliver him from that distraction which would inevitably be his portion, if she persisted in her seclusion from the world, since without her it would be to him only a portion of bitterness, and a scene of desolation.

"De Rosier," said she falteringly, after an appeal which he made to the tenderness she had once confessed for him, "it is too true that my heart still owns the influence of your attractions; but, though I have lost all hope of eradicating this unfortunate attachment, I can never consent to sacrifice to present short-lived happiness my future and eternal welfare; nor could I now, were I to yield to your entreaties, flatter myself with the hope of obtaining the

the former. My peace is broken, my health is undermined, and I feel that, in any situation, my days must soon draw to a close,—that I could only poison still more the few which are left, by adding guilt to wretchedness. Did not the principles in which I have been educated render sacred the service to which I have devoted myself, the last commands of *her* who was my only parent would form a solemn law, too inviolable to be broken without causing remorse more dreadful than every other species of wretchedness."

De Rosier represented the fallacy of the principles on which these commands were founded; and held up the example of her sister, and the happiness she enjoyed, to illustrate the superiority of the religion which the latter had embraced.

"Alas!" said Angelica, bursting into fresh tears, "it is my sister's apostacy that preys upon my existence: I must strive

to mediate between a justly-offended God and the dear misguided sinner; while my own heart is weighed down by the consciousness of an unhappy wandering, for which I can only atone by placing myself beyond the temptation of yielding to it." "De Rosier," continued she in an eager and tremulous voice, observing that he made an effort to interrupt her, "you have twice intruded on me without my consent, and disturbed the quiet which I was end eavouring toregain: it is cruel, barbarous, in you to act thus!—You well know that it is criminal in me to listen to you; and indeed you deceive yourself if you imagine me capable of being wilfully criminal: take then my last adieu. I would that you were happier, but it is not for me to comfort you!"—Here her voice became convulsed by sobs, she held out her hand to him, then hastily withdrew it, and hurried away, fully determined to see him no more.

The

The thought that she had now seen him for the last time transfixed her heart as with a poisoned arrow; and the dreadful emotions awakened by this last interview gave a shock to her frame which threatened the most fatal consequences.

She was attacked by a dangerous but lingering disease, which after some time brought her to the border of the grave; and, believing that her end drew near, she entreated the Abbess to send for her sister without delay, that she might have the consolation of dying in her arms. Mr. Fitzwilliam, ever attentive to the wishes of a wife whom he venerated, accompanied Maria himself to St. Etienne, where they found the poor drooping Angelica, indeed very ill, but not so much the victim of disease as to preclude all hope of her yet recovering. The meeting on both sides was silent and deeply affecting. Maria beheld the exquisite

beauty which had been for a while the wonder of thronging crowds "sicklied over" by the hues of death, pale, altered, and emaciated, " like gathered roses fading in the sun."—At the sight of her sister, Angelica's hoarded woes burst forth with fresh energy; and, when they were left alone together, and Mrs. Fitzwilliam began to probe the ingenuous heart of Angelica, she soon found that the disorder which ravaged her frame had its source there; that De Rosier still divided the empire of imagined duty, and caused all the agony of that sacrifice she so obstinately adhered to. She then again strove to convince her of the errors by which she was enwarped; she entreated her to place confidence in her assurances, that reason and nature were alike repugnant to the youthful sacrifice she thus blindly persisted in. The firm and unsophisticated faith of Fitzwilliam, illustrated by his manly and eloquent reasoning, had furnished her with new grounds of argument in favor

favor of Protestanism, and more demonstrable reasons by which to support them. The persuasive energy of truth at length shook the basis of Angelica's faith. She felt her reason assume a sovereignty of remonstrance, which threatened to subvert the government of those prejudices she had too fatally been instructed to revere.

A death-like paleness succeeded to the hectic flush this discovery had spread over her faded face. She tried to weep, but sorrow checked her tears; while her sister, eager to confirm the victory which she fancied she was now about to obtain, continued to enforce her persuasives with the earnestness of the deepest interest; acquiring fresh vigor of language, as these appearances encouraged her with the promise of success. But what was her astonishment and alarm, when, rising suddenly from the bed, Angelica caught her hands, and, in a voice dreadfully

dreadfully inarticulate by emotion, conjured her for the love of heaven to cease, and not to drive her to madness, by deprecating that which was now irrevocable! The wildness of her hollow eyes, the tremor of her frame, and the mysteriousness of her broken and desultory expressions, suggested to Maria the dreadful suspicion of insanity; and, though infinitely shocked by an idea so fraught with horror, that presence of mind which distinguished her character did not even now forsake her; but, with the most calm and soothing language, she strove to recall composure to her unhappy sister's mind.

Angelica soon perceived the mistake into which her appearance had betrayed her sister, and borrowing from her a temporary magnanimity, she calmly seated herself; and, rallying her disordered thoughts during a short interval of silence, with an air of inexpressible meek-

ness

ness and resignation she thus addressed her:

"It is too late, my sister, to lament errors that are past recall; we have each erred from a mistaken regard for the others present peace; you, in not earlier disclosing to me the change in your faith; and I, in concealing from you, for a moment, the irrevocable fiat which now stands betwixt mine and yours. Perhaps, when it was not a crime to listen to you, I might joyfully have yielded to your superior reason; perhaps, had I sooner made you acquainted with the extent of my objections to the apostacy you propose, the doubts you have now called up in my bosom had never arisen to disturb the quiet in which I hoped to have ended my days."—"What objections do you speak of?" interrupted Maria in a tone of affright: "what objections more binding than those of opinion, perverted by prejudice? These, my love,

love, may still be overcome; and I may yet see my beloved sister snatched from the gloomy regions of superstition, without that self-reproach which must for ever attend me, should my unfortunate concealment have contributed to strengthen her delusions." "Ah, Maria!" replied Angelica, "why did I talk of what might have been! It was but a possibility; and a concealment such as yours, which had the purest affection for its motive, ought not to inflict the pangs of self-reproach. It is I only who have to reproach myself; there was guilt in *my* concealment, for it has exposed me to hear what I ought never to have listened to.

"Shrink not, my best friend, from the secret I am about to open to you! My fears from your overpowering tenderness, and the ascendancy of De Rosier, which might have shaken the resolution I was told virtue commanded me to

to adhere to, conspired in a moment of fatal weakness and indecision to abet the seductions of religious enthusiasm; and, a very short time after you quitted the convent, to cut off all danger from a relapse, which seemed every moment to threaten me, I was persuaded to offer up those vows in private which the term of my probationary exercises had not yet entitled me to do in the final and public forms of conventual legislation. The Abbess and a holy Father, to whom I have been accustomed to make confession of all my wanderings, were the only witnesses of these vows; which, though informal, and consequently liable to be dissolved by the laws of man, are registered in heaven; and are as binding in the sight of God, as if confirmed by the testimony of thousands of spectators. I *have* learned to doubt whether what I have done be right according to reason; but we must silence our reason, when it ceases to be a friend. If I have embraced

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an error, I cannot charge myself with wilful guilt; and God is too merciful to punish as a crime the ignorance of his imperfect creature. Your reasons have not indeed satisfied,—they have only alarmed me; and I hope, and trust, it is but a temporary alarm; for, wearied as I am by the struggles and misgivings which have long embittered my life, I look forward with calm resignation to that entire seclusion from the world, which, if it be the will of heaven to prolong my existence, will soon leave me entirely at liberty to devote all my contemplations and my hopes to a world unseen. My short acquaintance with active life has not been such as to afford any very strong argument against quitting it. Nature seems to have designed me for retirement; for, even in my gayest days, the days of childhood, the pursuits which delighted you were never objects of my gratification; and but for one tie, which still has some attraction, even were my faith

faith conformed to yours, and I at liberty to pursue the dictates of my heart, I think I should still prefer a life such as I have embraced to that of mixing again with the noisy torrent of the world; but, situated as I am, even that tie must be obliterated. I speak not of losing *you*: though dead to the rest of the world, I may still be permitted sometimes to converse with you; and the knowledge of your happiness, in that path which you have chosen, will soften every thorn which may be found in mine. I have acknowledged to you the weakness which still pleads in my bosom for De Rosier; but I have not by that confession furnished you with a weapon against myself; for, independent of those vows which you are as incapable of asking me to violate as I am of renouncing, the dying word of my revered aunt, in stamping an interdiction on our union, will for ever withhold me from becoming his wife. Assure him of my esteem,

teem, my best wishes, my most fervent prayers for his happiness; but say, in mitigation of that determination which he accuses as cruel and unjust, that, were I at this moment as free to follow the dictates of my heart in regard to religious obligation as when I first yielded it to him, no power on earth could tempt me to disengage myself from a rigid observance of all that was implied in the parting mandate of my only parent."—

While Angelica spoke thus, the glow of virtue had endued her with a courage and an illusive greatness of soul, neither of which she was formed for supporting beyond the moments of romantic inspiration. She wished to be the heroic martyr that imagination anticipated; but her heart was made up of yielding gentleness, which could not long resist even the counsels of an enemy; of timidity, bordering upon infant weakness; and a warm

warm diffusive passion, which pervaded her every thought, and was so closely interwoven with its object, so perpetually awake, that habit hid its force, while the purity of her wishes deceived her caution in regard to its danger. Imagining that she was indeed reconciled to her fate, and too sensible of the sacred nature of her vows to urge her own wishes for their dissolution, Mrs. Fitzwilliam now desisted from all farther importunity, and only strove to render her sister's resignation more voluntary, by feigning a satisfaction which she was far from feeling.

She saw the folly and danger of encouraging doubts which could not now be confirmed without risking a real breach of conscience; and she rather sought to inspire her sister with that entire confidence in heaven, which rests its hopes on infinite mercy, than to inculcate the importance of penetrating the clouds

of error. During the continuance of her illness, she watched by her bed with the officiousness of servitude and the tenderness of friendship; and, while fear withheld Angelica from imparting the tumultuous conflicts which the lights she had obtained occasioned, Maria was equally cautious of hinting at whatever might embitter a sacrifice she now considered as irretrievable. Her cares succeeded in restoring her to health, but the happiness of Angelica was for ever wrecked! Though the name of De Rosier had not once passed her lips since that solemn renunciation of him, which she imagined would be as lasting as it was then sincere, he had every hour gained some new ascendency over her enfeebled heart; and, as the time now drew near which was to separate her from him beyond a possibility of retraction, she became more and more reluctant to fulfil the destiny her own misguided terrors had accelerated. Her borrowed firmness

ness was utterly exhausted. The weakness of superstition had played its part to the utmost, and now the weakness of love usurped its place. We can all be magnanimous in theory; we are perhaps all capable of a temporary heroism; but, when this is not genuine, the interval between the resolution and the action becomes doubly agonizing by that self-commendation with which we magnify the importance of the sacrifice, and which afterwards would reconcile us to it.

Angelica's vows were already made; but love and De Rosier persuaded her, that, as they were illegal and unconfirmed, it was still in her power to renounce them without a crime. Distracted by the impending prospect of losing her for ever, the danger of such an enterprise, and the apparent hopelessness of success, seemed only to add new vigour to De Rosier's determination of carrying her off by force, if he could not

not make her emancipation voluntary. Night after night he passed in wandering about the convent-walls, in search of some passage by which he might gain admittance to her, without alarming the vigilance of the *tourières*, whom he durst no longer apply to in open day. Under the disguise of a female dress, he at length found means to appear before her. It was a bright moon-light night, the last of her noviciation; and Angelica, according to the custom of the convent, had retired to spend it alone, at the foot of that altar before which on the morrow she was to make a public last renunciation of the world and De Rosier. The latter alone occupied her thoughts, and impressed them with horror and despair, when she was roused from her deep entrancement of hopeless anguish by the sound of his well-known voice.

"Angelica," said he, in a low and solemn tone, "am I to live or die? If you

you persist in your mistaken resolution of quitting the world, to-morrow I quit it also, and the crime be on your head! for you have bewildered my reason, and turned happiness to desperation."

She wept,—she trembled,—she implored, — she feigned a resistance she no longer felt ; — she spoke of her vows already passed, and shuddered to think of violating them! De Rosier called them false and nugatory :—" they had been extorted by imposition and terror, and it was more a crime to persist, while her heart refused its assent, than to break them at once, without consulting reason or conscience, both of which declared against her present resolution."

Nature at last revolted against them, and in a fatal moment she threw herself into his arms, and fled from the convent.

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The alarm was soon caught, and communicated throughout the cloisters. The news reached Mrs. Fitzwilliam next morning, just as she was setting out to attend her sister in the awful ceremony which had been preparing for her. Her astonishment and alarm on these unlooked-for tidings could only be increased, when, on sending to De Rosier's house, (on whom her suspicions had immediately fallen as the companion and abettor of her sister's flight,) he was found there, ready to clear himself from the imputation; and, with well-feigned amazement and regret, united with those who bewailed her imprudence. He played his part so well, that no one doubted his sincerity, and Mrs. Fitzwilliam gave herself up to the deepest anguish, which was augmented by the shocking anathemas levelled by the guardians of the holy church against the perjured apostate, and the continual dread that detection would deliver up her hapless sister to the cruel rigor of their implacable

implacable jurisdiction. Many weeks elapsed without throwing a ray of light on the fate of the unhappy fugitive: De Rosier, who had at first affected to assist their search for her, now gave it up as hopeless; and, encouraged by his example of resignation, Mrs. Fitzwilliam was at length prevailed upon to submit with patience to a calamity which seemed irremediable, and returned with her husband to England.

CHAP. VII.

——— the fatal dart
Sticks in his side, and rankles in his heart.

VIRG.

IN the mean time, Angelica, who had only been conveyed by her lover to a place of temporary concealment in the environs of Paris, suffered all the pangs of remorse and perpetual alarm. Though the scrupulous respect observed by De Rosier in his frequent secret visits allowed no cause of apprehension to the most rigid nature, and though his constant

and unabating attention, to every thing which could alleviate the inconveniences of her situation and amuse her mind, left her no doubt of his most fervent affection, her delicacy of feeling suggested an impropriety in these clandestine meetings, as their secresy destroyed even the momentary satisfaction they were calculated to afford. Her religious terrors too wore even a more threatening aspect than formerly; for, though she added her new-born doubts of the infallibility of the faith in which she had been educated to the other motives which had induced her flight, they were very far from being confirmed or consolidated with any other purer system, which might have brought comfort to her heart; while every moment's reflection gave some new horror to the guilt of perjury.

De Rosier brought her books furnished with every sophistry which could reconcile her to the latter; and others, the

tendency of which was to convert and confirm her faith on the principles of Protestantism: but the fears which haunted her imagination, the restlessness of continual affliction, and the enfeebled state of her body, rendered her utterly incapable of giving her mind to study, or even comprehending what she read; and she was too much embarrassed in De Rosier's presence to seek spiritual consolation from him, even had the shortness of his visits allowed time for the discussions which she longed to begin.

Thus cheerless and dispirited, that world, which she had always been too timid to picture as a scene of enjoyment, now appeared to her disturbed fancy as nothing but a cavern of woe, whence she had no prospect of escape but by death, and wherein she was doomed to encounter perpetual dangers and afflictions. Her nights were passed in sighs and tears, or slumbers broken by terrifying dreams;

and her days, in counting with a beating heart the moments of interval till her meetings with De Rosier, which, when they arrived, the same timidity precluded her from enjoying. De Rosier shared her anguish and remorse, though he affected to treat them with incredulity; and, while to his friends he wore the aspect only of calm despair, and sometimes of forced resignation, his mind was ravaged by the bitterest emotions of fear and self-reproach. He saw the danger of discovering her to *her* friends, and the still greater hazard of presenting her to his own as his wife, by which means alone he could have any certainty of supporting her as such, either with comfort or security. To continue her long undiscovered in her retreat was utterly impracticable; besides that here he durst not engage any Romish priest to marry them, and a Protestant one could not easily be found; and whither to conduct her

her with safety he knew not, and trembled to determine.

Amongst innumerable projects considered and rejected, he at length fixed on one, which, added to securing them from discovery for the present, promised to afford a temporary independence, and perhaps (at least the deceitful promises of fancy gave a better aspect to futurity) the influence of his father's rank and powerful connections at court might in time, he thought, work for them a less-equivocal safety. He expressed an earnest desire to travel, in order, he said, to dissipate the remembrance of his lost Angelica, by storing his mind with observation from the treasures and researches of other countries; demanding of his father such a necessary addition to his pension as would enable him to support an establishment of his own abroad, suitable to the dignity of his rank.

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To these requests the Marquis willingly acceded, and a few days after Mr. and Mrs. Fitzwilliam's departure from France, having first conducted Angelica to an inn on the road by which he was to pass, he took leave of his friends, and set out with her for Switzerland, attended only by servants who were in his confidence, and too faithfully attached to his person to betray what he wished them to conceal. They were married at the first Protestant canton to which they came; and, after making a tour of some extent through the country, and a few of the contiguous districts of Italy, they returned to the neighbourhood of Villeneuve, on the lake of Geneva; where they determined for a time to fix their residence, and assumed the names of Monsieur and Madame de Lauzun.

De Rosier hired a delightful villa, situated on the borders of this romantic lake which has given birth to so many efforts of descriptive genius. Drowning all remem-

brance of the past, or uneasy anticipation of the future, in the luxury of present happiness, he gave himself up to the tranquil pleasures of domestic life; and found in the society of this idolized Angelica a tenfold compensation for the friends and the home which for her sake he had abandoned. She too was happy for a while, if happiness can be called that which is often broken in upon by sudden starts of bitter remembrance, which, even amid the smiles and gaiety her features assumed while her husband was beside her, would sometimes strike a dagger to her heart, and ask the dreadful question, "Art thou not a guilty perjurer?" De Rosier saw her always cheerful, always occupied; but the moment she found herself alone, tears and lassitude overwhelmed her; and there were times, during his occasional short absences, when, with the idea of being deserted by all the world but him, a sense of guilt, an universal uneasiness, pervaded her whole frame, and threw her into such

paroxysms

paroxysms of fear and nervous weakness, that every footstep in the hall, or carriage-wheel that sounded at a distance, affected her almost to phrenzy. She had more than once been found by the servants in deep and tedious faintings, out of which, when she recovered, her first care was to guard them against mentioning her indisposition to their master. This precaution, which both duty and tenderness suggested, was indeed necessary: had De Rosier conceived the most remote suspicion, that the smiles he saw animating the lovely face on which he doated with increasing fondness were ever converted into secret tears, his suppressed anxieties would have burst into little short of madness; for he carried in his bosom a lambent flame of high-wrought honor, which needed but the slightest collision to overwhelm him with anguish and remorse, though for the present the delirium of satisfied passion lulled to silence its remonstrances.

Angelica's watchful tenderness long saved him from such a discovery; and he was too eager to believe her happy, too fearful of inquiring into what he could not bear to doubt, to mistrust common appearances. Had he not been studiously blind however, many circumstances might have betrayed the real state of her mind, in spite of all her precautions. When alone, she used sometimes to sooth her melancholy by poetry and music. She was a simple verse-writer, but she could amuse *herself* in that way, although her compositions had perhaps nothing to recommend them, except that they were faithful delineations of the feeling of the moment. She was one day endeavouring to set to music a sonnet which she had just written, and in a strain even more mournful than usual, when De Rosier, who had rode out, returning to her unexpectedly, and much earlier than he had intended, surprised her in tears, with the paper lying before her.

her. She hastily wiped them away, and, attempting to smile, caught the sonnet from De Rosier's hand, just as he began to read it.

"And why would you hide it, my love?" said he with a look both of reproach and alarm; "you have not surely any secrets with me?" Angelica was irresolute, but his *look* determined her, and she gave it to him. "You will see that it is no billet-doux;" said she, forcing a smile, while her heart was struggling with anguish and reluctance. De Rosier read it.

ON A DYING LAMB.

Oh! that, poor innocent! thy pangs were mine,
Inflicted only by the gripe of death!
No thought reproachful, no remorse is thine,
To give convulsions to the parting breath.

Ev'n now thy struggles all are hush'd to rest;
Calm lies the victim of eternal sleep:
See how the meekness of a spotless breast
Hangs o'er the face that never learn'd to weep!

How

How have I seen thee, bounding, gay, and free,
By snatches browsing on the shrub or mead!
Like me unskill'd, (amid thy trusting glee,)
To part the blossom from the bitter weed:—
What diff'rent fruits our like mistake did breed!
To *thee* 'twas nutriment,—'twas *death to me!*

"Do not you think it very pretty?" said Angelica, with an air of affected unconcern.—"Is it not your *own* composition then?" cried De Rosier eagerly; "and to what does it allude, that you appeared to be so much affected by it?" "It was written by a Nun of St. Etienne," replied Angelica falteringly, and blushing a deep scarlet: "She wilfully took the vows, and afterwards *repented* the deed. I have wept many a time at the story of her sorrows."

"And you have no other interest in them but compassion?" inquired he, fixing upon her a scrutinizing look. "Why should I?" said she faintly: "*she* was separated from her lover, I have my De Rosier still!" De Rosier strove to be deceived

by

by the subterfuge, but he could not trust himself with another word, and Angelica hurried to her own apartment to hide her gathering tears. Incidents of this kind frequently occurred; but still De Rosier believed not their most obvious interpretations, while *she* seemed anxious to conceal them.

But Angelica could not stay the fading roses of her cheeks, nor hide the increasing langour which pervaded her slight frame. Her health visibly drooped, and her appetite was gone; yet still she endeavoured to make light of these circumstances, and only attributed them to the promises she now gave of soon becoming a mother. De Rosier believed her, and continued confident and happy, till she at length presented him with a daughter.—De Rosier had her christened Adonia, which was his wife's second name, and that which he had accustomed himself to call her by since their concealment.

ment. In the rapture of becoming a father, he forgot every adverse circumstance of his child's birth, and only prayed that she might do honor to the beloved name, and prove "a being as angelic as her mother!" Madame de Rosier recovered very slowly; but, fearful of alarming her husband, and tired of the confinement of a sick room, where she found her gloomy thoughts recur more frequently than ever, she could not be prevailed on to obey all the instructions prescribed by her physician: and, assuring De Rosier that she was perfectly restored to strength, and should be injured by the closeness of her confinement, persuaded him to permit her to take an airing within a month from her lying-in. The mild serenity of the air, the enchanting beauty of the surrounding scenes, glowing in all the vivifying colours of spring, and the renovated gladness which dawned in her bosom on finding herself once more released from a bed of languishment, gave

gave new colour to her cheeks and fresh vivacity to her eyes. Her beauty shone with the most attractive lustre,—*but it was for the last time!*

Mrs. Fitzwilliam, to whom suspense was the only evil which her fortitude could not surmount, feeling herself more and more unhappy as time wore away without bringing any tidings of her lost sister, had once more prevailed upon her husband to return with her to France, in order to renew their inquiries in person, which she had only been persuaded to drop by the assurance that time must unravel the mystery of her concealment. But, finding no relief in Paris, and wholly unable to obtain any traces of the fugitive which tended to the desired discovery, she again fell a prey to the most poignant regret; and Mr. Fitzwilliam, trembling for its effects on her health, sought to banish remembrance from her mind by travelling. Hoping to disperse

uneasy reflections, by calling her attention to the magnificent novelty of scenes, of which all that can be conveyed by description affords but a feeble representation, he conducted her to Switzerland by the way of Auvergne; and, after proceeding from thence to the country of the Valois, where wild and unproductive mountains, heaped on one another, and surmounted by perpetual snows, seem to threaten annihilation to the hardy inhabitants of the vallies, they descended to the luxuriant borders of the lake of Geneva. Here Mrs. Fitzwilliam's sorrow indeed underwent a temporary suspension. Her mind was soothed and her imagination exalted by the lovely volume of contemplation which now laid open before her; and she passed several days in sketching with her pencil, in their different attitudes and ever-varying tints, the very scenes which surrounded the dwelling of her sister.

On

On this first morning of Angelica's coming abroad after her confinement, during one of these rambles, Mr. and Mrs. Fitzwilliam drew near the door of a cottage where some children were at play; who, mistaking them for Monsieur and Madame Rosier, (or De Lauzun, as they were called,) ran out to make the little obeisances which they had taught them; but, turning quickly with an air of strong disappointment, the eldest of the groupe, who was a sun-burnt rosy girl, not more than seven or eight years old, exclaimed to her companion, "Ah! they are not our own Monsieur and Madame; but no matter; I am to carry some chickens to Fraismont this afternoon, and then we shall get our hats!" "And who lives at Fraismont?" inquired Mrs. Fitzwilliam; confusedly recollecting something of the Marquis's having told her that his son's last letter was dated from a Fraismont in Switzerland. "Monsieur and Madame de Lauzun," said the girl. "De Lauzun!" exclaimed

exclaimed Mr. Fitzwilliam in his turn, struck by hearing a name with which he was intimately acquainted. "And pray who is this Monsieur de Lauzun?" "Oh!" replied the girl, who seemed delighted to prattle, "don't you know him? Every body knows him, he is so good: and they say that his father wanted him to marry some great lady he did not like, but he was married already, and so he came here with his own wife, and hid himself, and people are all wondering and talking about them; for, though they are the best people in the world, and the handsomest too, and as rich as any body, they never visit about like the rest of the fine folks, but stay at home, and do all the good they can among the poor people.—Ah! and I'll tell you more! Madame had a little daughter lately, and Monsieur promised that whenever she came abroad again, she should bring Jeannette and I each a new straw-hat; and so when I saw you, oh! thought I, here come our nice hats;

for

for it was but a few minutes ago that I saw Madame herself drive past in their cabriolet, and she looked so sweetly at me as she passed! Ah! I would run half a mile to make my courtesy to her."—"But, my good little girl," interrupted Mr. Fitzwilliam, checking the progress of her volubility, which had taken an opposite direction from the object of his curiosity, "can you not tell me where Monsieur De Lauzun came from? Is he not a native of Zurich?"—The girl hesitated; but, too vain of her importance in being thought wise enough to answer the strange gentleman's questions to confess her ignorance, she presently replied, "Yes, that was the very place, and I have heard it said that Madame is a foreigner too, an English woman I think they call her: and now I remember I have heard too, that Monsieur de Lauzun's father was a doctor, or some such thing." The latter parts of her information had actually been in circulation of late among the neighbours;

bours; and who, busied in discovering these *inconnus*, had fixed their suspicions in regard to De Rosier on the same gentleman whom it unfortunately happened Mr. Fitzwilliam conjectured him to be. This gentleman was the son of a physician at Zurich, and a distant relation by his mother's side of Fitzwilliam's late aunt, Mrs. Selwyn. He had visited her at York a short time before her death, and there privately married a young woman who had no fortune but her merit, and no distinction but her beauty.

Fitzwilliam was much attached to him, and at parting they had agreed to correspond; but circumstances exactly similar to those related by the little girl had broken off all intercourse between them, and Fitzwilliam had lately been informed that he now lived retired with his English wife in some part of the canton of Berne, though where he did not exactly know. From such a coincidence, not a doubt re-
mained

mained to him but that this must be the same person after whom he had made frequent inquiries since his arrival in the canton, and he determined if possible to see his supposed friend before he quitted Villeneuve. To intrude upon him, however, without first inquiring whether such a visit would be agreeable was not his design, as a long time had elapsed since they parted, and he knew not what other circumstances, besides those he had been made acquainted with, might have intervened to render it embarrassing: he also resolved to write, and inform him that an old friend, an English acquaintance, wished to pay his respects to him if convenient, at the same time sportively preparing for him what he thought would create a pleasing surprise by suppressing his name. The cottage of the little peasant's father furnished him with pen and ink, and he drew from his pocket a slip of paper, on which, having written the above message in a disguised hand, he

gave it in charge to their young conductress, and directed her to bring the answer to the cottage, where he would send one of his servants for it in the evening, not choosing to employ any of his own people on the first errand, from his friend's obvious desire to remain concealed. It was almost evening before the messenger, encumbered with a large basket of poultry and the importance of her embassy, arrived at Fraismont. She did not as usual content herself with waiting in the kitchen till sent for, as she sometimes was, to amuse De Rosier and his wife with her engaging prattle; but, with a consequential air, she said to the servant who accosted her, that she had something for her master, which nobody must deliver but herself.

These words the man incautiously repeated to Monsieur de Rosier before Angelica; who, greatly fatigued by her imprudent airing, laid reclined on a sopha, while

while De Rosier watched anxiously over her. She immediately caught the alarm, and, before he had time to re-assure her, the little messenger came running into the room (all the avenues to which she was well acquainted with) with the billet in her hand, repeating as fast as she was able all the circumstances of her meeting with the strange gentleman, and the inquiries he had made. De Rosier, who was more apprehensive about his wife than the contents of the unexpected letter, paid little attention to the child's rapid and desultory prattle; and, having rather impatiently ordered that she should be paid and sent away, he sat down beside his Angelica, and with the most soothing language besought her to be more composed. But she had unfortunately, amid the perturbation of her mind, heard only enough to justify her fears, without satisfying them, for fear ever catches at the darkest side of objects; and Angelica had so long brooded in secret over hers, that one suspicious word was sufficient to

stir up the smothered anguish. She had gathered from the girl's expressions, that a gentleman, who seemed well acquainted with his reasons for concealment, had inquired after her husband, and meant to visit him; but she had remarked none of those circumstances which would have shewn her that De Rosier was mistaken for another person; and her busy imagination conjured up every image of horror which could follow their detection, should the stranger persist to pursue his inquiries in person.

De Rosier, finding that serious expostulation failed to quiet her alarm, had recourse next to raillery, and attempted to throw an air of ridicule on her distress, by laughing her out of what he called her chimerical fears; but her heart was too full to bear being sported with. Giving him a look of ineffable agony, she burst into tears, and the secret of her long-concealed misery flashed upon him for the first time with the dreadful conviction, that

that what he now saw her suffer was but a renewal, which she had been too much off her guard to restrain, of anguish and remorse that had never been extinguished. Distracted by her emotions, it was with much difficulty that he forbore adding to them by his own; but, flattering himself that the contents of the billet which he still held unopened might prove a balm for both, and at any rate eager to know the whole of what awaited them, he hastily tore it open. He read it with a mixture of hope and fear, that heightened the wildness of his looks, and by the contagion of ever-watchful sympathy it was instantaneously communicated to the heart of Angelica. Before he could make her acquainted with what he had read, she sunk lifeless at his feet; and, when at length the cares of her husband restored her to recollection, he found her so ill, that a physician was immediately judged necessary, who, when he arrived and examined her symptoms, shewed

ed by his looks that the worst might be apprehended.

He inquired whether she had not met with some unusual cause of mental agitation. De Rosier answered in the affirmative, and also owned that she had that morning ventured out, which was directly contrary to his advice. The latter circumstance confirmed the doctor's alarm, and roused his indignation against her husband for having yielded to her imprudent wish. He was an honest-hearted man, of unadorned speech. "You have killed her!" cried he, in a voice that sounded in De Rosier's ears like a sentence of eternal condemnation.

'He passed the night by her bedside in a state of distraction that no one can conceive who has not like De Rosier been suddenly roused from a state of blind and doting felicity to the threatened loss of an object that absorbed his whole soul.

With

With despair imprinted on his features, he stood holding back the curtain of her bed, listening with dreadful eagerness to hear whether her heart did not beat quicker, or her respiration become more disturbed. At length, toward morning, she sunk into an unhoped-for and quiet sleep, and De Rosier stole out of the apartment, like the trembling miser, who fears lest his very breathing should betray the spot that contains his treasure: thence he proceeded softly to the cradle of his infant, who laid wrapped in unconscious and profound sleep. The dawn of morning threw a gentle stream of light across its placid face, and, as the father drew aside the slight covering of white silk that was thrown over the cradle, its little cheeks seemed conscious of the soft movement, and dimpled with a smile of the meekest innocence. De Rosier would have snatched her to his bosom, and watered her fair face with tears of unutterable emotion, when a ser-

vant entered, and delivered to him the following billet from Fitzwilliam, written without that ambiguity which had misled him in the first, but still addressed to the supposed M. de Lauzun.

"On my return home yesterday, after dispatching the billet written to inform you of my having discovered the place of your retreat, I found letters lying for me, the contents of which oblige me to set out immediately for Paris. Thus pressed by time, you will forgive me for presuming on the intimacy of an old friend, if I pay my respects to you this morning at breakfast without waiting for an invitation, which I flatter myself you will judge unnecessary, when you recollect the hand-writing of your faithful friend,

HENRY FITZWILLIAM."

A thunder-bolt could not have given a more rapid or violent shock than the sight

sight of this well-known signature to the startled De Rosier. For some moments he remained stupified, and almost insensible, in that chaos of tumultuous and various feelings which eludes the consciousness of any distinct perception. His child awoke, and, spreading out its innocent hands, began to cry. The sound quickened the chords of parental tenderness to agony. "Poor babe!" cried he, "perhaps thou wilt soon have no mother to cherish, no father to protect, thee!"

The idea roused him from his unmanly lethargy, and he felt himself called upon to consider what might yet be done to avert the dangers that threatened them. To escape by flight seemed impossible, for Angelica was in a condition which would render it death to remove her, and to leave her behind him in such a state was to him worse than death. To attempt concealment now would also be wholly ineffectual; for, as he had

lately acquainted his father with his residence in the neighbourhood of Villeneuve, the inquiries which the Marquis would naturally make, when he found that Fitzwilliam had been so near the place where he had reason to believe his son still resided, must lead to a discovery of the circumstances under which he lived, his change of name and seclusion from society, and consequently to a direct suspicion of the whole of his unfortunate wanderings from truth and rectitude.

To prevent Angelica's being seen by Fitzwilliam seemed then the only effort that was left him to try. He therefore determined to set out immediately for the inn, whence his note was dated, under pretence of sparing him the trouble of coming to Fraismont, to make known to him some of his motives for concealment, without letting him know who was the partner of his retirement, and to enjoin

join him to secresy. How great then was the astonishment of Fitzwilliam, when, a few moments after his servant had announced M. de Lauzun, instead of the young man whom he flew to embrace, De Rosier, pale and trembling, took his hand in silence! After their first salutations were over, and Fitzwilliam and his wife had in some degree recovered from the surprise occasioned by so unexpected a meeting, the former began gaily to rally him on his secret marriage, while Maria, who felt shocked and wounded by the idea of his having so soon forgotten her unfortunate sister, fixed her dark eyes upon his varying countenance with the most scrutinizing attention. At the mention of his marriage, the blood forsook De Rosier's cheeks and lips; he started with a resistless movement, and looked fearfully at Mrs. Fitzwilliam, who seemed to meet his eye with an expression of unusual severity and reproach. "Do you then know all?" cried he faintly. "Faith!"

replied Fitzwilliam gaily, "there needs no magic incantation to discover your secrets, when you are careless enough to leave them at the mercy of so excellent a gossip as my little communicative nymph of the *chaumière*. Come, look not so doleful, *mon ami*; there is no cause for your penitentials here; you may as well keep them in embryo for the service of the Marquis, who, I dare say, will need all you can muster to assuage *his* burning ire." "Hear me, Fitzwilliam!" interrupted De Rosier with energy: "my story is not of a nature to be sported with; and, if the confession I am now about to make, of the particulars of a conduct which I am conscious merits condemnation, is insufficient, from the agonizing consequences that have ensued, to move your pity and forgiveness, let me at least be spared the insulting taunts of disguised reproach!"

"Hold,

"Hold, my friend!" exclaimed Fitzwilliam, in a tone of the same unsuspicious good humour with which he had begun; "I require no confessions; keep these for your temporal or spiritual father. I do not even ask to know what quarter of the globe had the honor of giving birth to your fair incognita; and I only expect, in return for my forbearance, that you will treat me with a sight of this incomparable, this unique damsel, who has the merit of having converted the gallant Vicomte de Rosier into the plain, fatherly, Monsieur de Lauzun."

This unexpected discovery of Fitzwilliam's ignorance in regard to his wife produced an instantaneous change on De Rosier's countenance; a flush of gladness suffused his expressive features, and Maria, who had been accustomed to trace the workings of the soul on the countenance, had read attentively all the various revolutions of his; and now interpreted them into something like the truth.

 He

He remained some time silent, perplexed how to frame a proper answer to his friend's request, and conjecturing either what might be the extent of his information, or how far he might attempt to mislead him as to those circumstances which he was still ignorant of. Maria's hopes became more vigorous as she noted this perplexity, and she waited with trembling eagerness for his reply.

This however he evaded. As soon as he had recovered sufficient self-command to carry on the deception which he saw so favorably begun, he proceeded with expressions of contrition for having suffered himself to act in a manner so as to merit his father's displeasure; acknowledged that he had made an imprudent marriage; drew a slight sketch of fictitious motives to palliate and account for his concealments, and concluded with intreating Mr. and Mrs. Fitzwilliam to bury in oblivion these circumstances, which accident

accident had compelled him to disclose.

Maria experienced some disappointment when she found nothing in what he had related which tended to confirm her suspicion of her long-lost sister being implicated in his mysterious conduct; yet his avoiding to answer her husband's request, and the impressive and guilt-like manner of his first address, still left room for doubt and surmise; assuming, therefore, as careless an air as she could command:

" But you have not, De Rosier," said she, " promised to introduce us to our new cousin. You must positively do us that pleasure before we leave your neighbourhood; and, as we are to beat an early march, and must pass near your villa, suppose we take Fraismont in our way this morning." This proposal de Rosier declined, by pleading his wife's indisposition,

sition, which, he said, confined her to her bed; but he did it with an air of embarrassment and alarm which gave fresh colouring to Maria's hopes; while Fitzwilliam rejected his excuses, by saying with mingled raillery and impatience, that "her illness must have been devilish rapid in its progress, since it was but yesterday that she was seen gliding through these fairy woods, and looking like a Dryad, or an attendant of Diana."—"Who saw her there?" inquired De Rosier eagerly, relapsing into his original alarm. —"Those who are well acquainted with both her and you," replied Fitzwilliam, shaking his head with an air that implied more perfect information than he chose to acknowledge. The blood again receded to De Rosier's heart, and then rushed furiously back to his cheeks. "If you know my wife," cried he passionately, "why do you hesitate to own it? By what right do you interest yourself in my private concerns?" These words were

no

no sooner uttered, than, recollecting Fitzwilliam's first expression, the natural and unpremeditated air of which plainly evinced his entire ignorance of what the unhappy husband dreaded, shame and fear for the consequences of this unguarded sally, co-operating with the agitation he already suffered, quite subdued him, and, seizing Fitzwilliam's hands in his, he conjured him in the most pathetic language to forgive the unjust irritation of a man, who, seeing his own happiness and that of an object dearer to him than existence on the point of being for ever overthrown, had lost the power of restraining passions, which bordered on madness in the wild excess of terror and self-reproach. But this emphatic address, still more imprudent than the hasty expression which occasioned it, produced the very effect De Rosier intended it should prevent; and Maria's suspicions immediately communicated themselves to the breast of her husband, though in tenderness to her

her he forbore hinting at them in her presence. Assuming however a gravity which now corresponded with his internal sentiments, he coldly answered, that he had no right to inquire into Monsieur de Rosier's private affairs; and, if they were of a nature that could not bear the scrutiny of a friend, he was very far from wishing to be made acquainted with them. Maria, whose hopes were confirmed almost beyond a doubt, and who dreaded lest her husband's cold severity should frustrate her design of following out her suppositions in person, prevented De Rosier's reply, by saying with an air of friendly confidence, that she knew her cousin too well to believe that any part of his conduct could require a longer concealment than that which might be necessary to prepare his father for the news of so unexpected an event as his marriage,—an engagement which, having been contracted without his consent or privacy, would naturally

cause

cause some displeasure, till such time as every thing could be explained to his satisfaction. "But, come," continued she gaily, (anxious for the present to end a conversation so interesting and painful to them all,) "we have never offered De Rosier any refreshment since he came, and I really think, after the mental trepidation we have occasioned him, he has a right to expect some attention to his corporeal interests.—Do ring the bell, and order breakfast, Fitzwilliam; and in the mean time, De Rosier, I must bespeak your criticism on some drawings I have made since I came to this enchanted ground, and for which I only want the fiat of an amateur like you to confirm my own private expectations of outrivalling Claude Lorraine himself." This unembarrassed sally, which the perplexed and agonized De Rosier had little expected, produced the intended effect of quieting his apprehensions. A mind bewildered like his was no match for the penetrating

penetrating and determined Maria. With apparent gaiety she engaged him in conversation on different general topics, chatted with rapid vivacity, and detained him unsuspectedly till the servants had informed them that Mr. Fitzwilliam's carriage was at the door, and every thing in readiness for their journey. "Well, De Rosier," said Maria, "what say you now to our stopping at Fraismont? Believe me, we have no hostile designs on the heart of your fair sposa; but it would give us pleasure to obtain a place in it, with your permission. Besides, we shall be able to say a great deal more to the Marquis in vindication of your choice, by having a personal interest in the lady. Indeed you will injure yourself, De Rosier, if you refuse my request." The last words were spoken with an anguished impatience of tone and a look full of meaning which penetrated De Rosier's soul, and utterly incapacitated him from replying; while

Fitzwilliam,

Fitzwilliam, observing the strong reluctance and alarm that his silence denoted, now begged his wife would desist from a proposal apparently so inconvenient or unpleasant. But Maria was not to be silenced, and De Rosier becoming every moment more uneasy and embarrassed, and less able to produce any reasonable objection, she broke hastily away from him, and, saying with a smile which but ill covered the agitation of her heart, that "this was a whim in which she was determined to be indulged," beckoned Fitzwilliam to follow her to the carriage. After telling the postillion to stop at Fraismont, they drove away, while De Rosier, whom the rapidity of these circumstances had almost robbed of recollection, roused from his lethargic stupor by their departure, hastily mounted his horse, and, taking a nearer road, galloped homewards with furious speed, vainly hoping yet to avert the dreaded discovery. Angelica had awakened much

refreshed from a long and tranquil sleep; the occurrences of the preceding evening appeared to her like a frightful and confused dream, which was only perfectly recalled to her when on inquiring for her husband she learned that he had been absent some hours. Alarmed by this intelligence, she hastily rose, in spite of the remonstrances of those about her and the feebleness of her frame, and, throwing on the first attire that came to hand, she went herself to inquire particularly among the servants all the circumstances which had preceded his departure. Her mind was soon relieved from the greater part of its oppressive load by the information of the man who had questioned the little peasant the day before on the subject of her embassy, and who happened to be one of the servants who had accompanied them from Paris. He had gathered from her answers, that his master was mistaken by the gentleman whose inquiries had made so much alarm for another person of the

the name he had assumed; and, from a mistake so simple and natural, he easily persuaded Madame de Rosier, that there was nothing serious to be apprehended. This assurance was corroborated in her opinion by the circumstance of the second letter, which the servant likewise informed her of, though he could not tell her its contents: for the writer of it, she thought, would never have expected De Rosier to wait on him, had he been at all acquainted with his motives for seclusion.

Thus satisfied and relieved, she thought of nothing but the pleasure of talking over their past alarms when her beloved De Rosier should return to her, the satisfaction it would give him to see that she had recovered from her fatigues and contradicted the doctor's evil omens, and the delight she should have in being able to nurse and fondle her little girl herself. With such ideas thronging in pleasing suc-

cession on her mind, she returned to her chamber; and, having dressed herself in a simple habit, which was selected as having been praised by De Rosier, and anticipated his congratulations on the improvement of her looks, she next went to superintend the dressing of her lovely infant, who was just awake, and who she intended should afford the fond father an agreeable surprise, by making her first appearance in the drawing-room in her own arms.

She had scarcely finished breakfast, and conveyed her darling to a sopha near the window that commanded the road by which she expected to see her husband pass, when De Rosier, who had already arrived, rushed wildly into the room; and, before he had time to explain the meaning of his frantic looks and gestures, the noise of carriage-wheels announced the approach of Mr. and Mrs. Fitzwilliam. Angelica darted a fearful and inquiring look

look towards the carriage, to seek that information which her husband was incapable of giving, and in doing so caught a passing view of her sister's features, which were too deeply engraven on her heart not to be instantly recognized. Joy, terror, and astonishment, proved too powerful for her weak and exhausted frame: she shrieked out wildly, and fell back in strong convulsions. The emotions of Mrs. Fitzwilliam, though less fatal, were not less violent when she entered the apartment, followed by her husband, and beheld her long-lost sister, her new found treasure, to all appearance struggling with the icy grasp of death,—the innocent child lying on the ground, uttering its feeble cries unheeded, and the distracted husband bending over them with a countenance of despair, wringing his hands, and equally incapable of either giving assistance to the dying sufferer himself or calling in the aid of others! A few hours restored Angelica to recollection and composure,

posure, and gave a deceitful and short-lived hope to her afflicted friends. Her constitution, already undermined by the ravages of concealed suffering, was not capable of sustaining this last tumultuous shock; and the indisposition occasioned by her imprudence, which had the day before so alarmingly threatened her, now returned with all the accumulated symptoms of a rapid decay. The assurance of her sister's love, and that her unhappy deviation from the paths of truth would now be known only to those whose tenderness for her memory would bury it along with her in that grave to which she knew she was hastening, gave comfort to those worldly feelings that still annexed importance to the preservation of her fame; and her reliance on the mercy and benevolence of her Creator, added to the recollection of a life spent, except in one fatal instance, in uniform piety and innocence, enabled her to look with a firm and trusting eye towards the period of her approaching fate.

The

The anguish which it had cost her for some time past to carry on the deceptions that one false step had rendered necessary, and the very small portion of enjoyment she had ever possessed during her sojourn in a world where sensibility must often meet with several wounds, and refinement prove but a specious and deceptive ornament to its possessor, contributed likewise to wean her heart from its lingering affections. "I have often told you," said she, meekly, to the weeping groupe who surrounded her bed as she addressed them for the last time, "that I should make but a poor figure in the bustle of active life; and the experience of the last eighteen months too feelingly informs me, that, had I even been placed in the most fortunate or favorable circumstances, I still must have proved but a fragile and unprofitable being. My expectations of happiness in this life were confined to a few simple objects; my affections all centered in a few dear

and valuable friends; but, alas! what were these when I possessed them to a heart poisoned by self-reproach? I leave you, my Theodore, with a firm persuasion of an advantageous change, and of that future re-union which will greatly cancel all earthly suffering. I would wish my child to be educated in the Protestant faith: but, oh! *whatever* be her early principles of religion, be careful that she *adhere to them through life.* Nothing can compensate for the respect implanted in childhood towards sacred objects, and that respect must be irreparably diminished whenever we are suffered to call in question the purity of our *first impressions.*" She would have added more, but her voice now failed, her eyes grew dim, and assumed the fixed and hollow gaze of death!

"You will think there is something of female vanity mingled with the pleasure I take in speaking of this dear and unfortunate

fortunate sister," (said Mrs. Fitzwilliam to her daughter Johanna, about fifteen years after these events, as she related to her the story of her aunt's misfortunes,) "if, in order to present Angelica more forcibly to your imagination, I attempt giving you a slight sketch of her personal advantages. Yet I have always thought, that those estimates of characters which we form from description are most definite, as well as liveliest, when we can connect with them some idea of the face and figure of the person described. Angelica's were so characteristic, so exquisitely fitted to her mind, that, to obtain an acquaintance with the features of her character in their most interesting light, needs also their association.—She was, at the unfortunate period when I met her in Switzerland, so tall, that, had she been more robust, the idea of commanding dignity would at the first glance have transcended that of feminine softness; but, as she was, her height increased the in-

teresting languor of her appearance, by causing from the delicacy of her person a slight bend in her carriage. Her features were soft, feminine, and harmonious; and the general contour of her face, which was thin and pallid, accorded with a certain timid sensibility, an irresistibly sympathetic expression of placid melancholy, which was the native language of her eyes:—those eyes, Johanna!—how shall I describe them, when I feel them at this moment searching the inmost recesses of my heart! They were blue, full, and lucid, and their long black lashes produced a contrast with the transparent whiteness of her skin, which, combining with the aerial lightness of her whole figure, gave her face rather the appearance of something floating in the dreams of fancy than moulded by the hand of nature; and, when she smiled, there was a mingled sweetness and sadness in it that would have made you weep. Never, never, shall I forget the look of pensive resignation which

which overspread that beautiful countenance as the dear suffering girl laid speechless on the bed of death! *My* arms supported her; I tried in vain to warm back the decaying vital spirit. She looked affectionately upon me, and then at her infant, who laid sleeping beside her,—as if to recommend the sweet babe to my tenderness. Her husband knelt by the bed; his ineffectual prayers were rendered unutterable by distraction. She held out her thin emaciated hand to him, and with her last looks riveted on him expired."

De Rosier sunk into a state of insensibility, from which he awoke to the wildest ravings of despair. Mrs. Fitzwilliam affected a composure which she did not experience; but she saw the necessity of suppressing her own anguish for the sake of the wretched mourner. For him she was obliged to think and act; and the charge of directing the sad

funereal preparations, which devolved on her, served in some measure to relieve her mind, by changing its object from the contemplation of her loss to that of its consequences.

De Rosier too, amid all the turbulence of his first shock, had yet a deeper, a more solid, misery to taste. He saw indeed the lovely, the adored, form, which had so lately owned the animating powers of existence, stretched pale and cold upon a sable stole, and surrounded with the gloomy insignia of death,—silent, immoveable to their tears, unable to escape from the devouring jaws of the dark unsocial grave, doomed to smile, to talk, no more! to wake not at the return of morning, nor ever again gaze upon the cheerful landscape! The business and pleasures of the world would flow on in their accustomed course, but she no more would join in them! a few years passed, and

and it would be forgotten that this lovely and fragrant flower had ever bloomed!

These were the images which occupied him now; but these chiefly regarded the lamented object through the medium of that false and unavailing pity which arises in the mind on the first contemplation of death, and which divides for a while the operation of its own grief. But he had yet to learn the anguish of retrospection,—of *looking back* to those days of deceitful happiness when Angelica was his constant companion, of starting at the imagined sound of her voice or footstep, only to be stabbed by the renewed conviction that she was gone for ever!—of wishing for the society of Angelica, and wondering why she was not present, when Angelica could come to him no more!—Mr. and Mrs. Fitzwilliam attended the remains of the lamented Angelica to Chatillon; where, before De Rosier was joined by the Marquis, they left him, and proceed-

ed to Paris by another route, in order to avoid the suspicion of having been connected with his unknown wife.

Business detained Mr. Fitzwilliam in Paris longer than he expected; but, fortunately for De Rosier's peace, their meetings were very limited and unfrequent; for the former was almost constantly engaged, and Maria had become so much the victim of affliction, that she never went abroad, and admitted no visits whatever. But, though there was little intercourse between the families, Fitzwilliam soon heard the rumour of De Rosier's intended marriage, which he at first received with contempt and incredulity, but the report was scarcely made general, ere it was confirmed by the celebration of the nuptials; and Maria heard the strange, the almost incredible, tidings just as she was preparing to make a parting visit at the hôtel de Bellefonde. She heard too, as an aggravation of his inconstancy and disrespect

disrespect to the memory of her sister, that he had parted with his child, and consigned her to the care of some menial dependent! Shocked at an appearance of such dreadful levity and inhuman coldness to the feelings of a husband and a parent, she quitted France without inquiring farther, or deigning to take leave of the unhappy sufferer; who, on his part, knew too well how to account for this unkind treatment, though the secret motives of his conduct were of a nature which he could not explain even to her. It was however a new wound to his feelings, that she who had loved his Angelica with fondness little inferior to his own, and who he thought was equally sensible of her right to perpetual remembrance, should imagine him capable of slighting her memory, while he possessed not the power of vindicating himself from an imputation of forgetfulness, to the injustice of which every movement of his

agonized bosom bore too faithful testimony.

CHAP. VIII.

A soul, exasperated in ills, falls out
With every thing, its friends, itself!

CATO.

THE Comte de l'Avignon, now possessed of the secret of his friend, and the means of blazoning a conduct which in a country of religious bigotry was liable to the severest punishment, was nevertheless too cautious of undermining his own interests to be hasty in throwing aside the veil that screened the unhappy Marquis de Bellefonde from disgrace, on whom by

by the King's death he now became as dependent as ever. He played his part so well, that De Bellefonde found in his society the only consolation his sorrows could admit of. He could talk to him of his lost Angelica, while to the rest of the world he was forced to wear the uneasy restraint of assumed cheerfulness; and this dangerous resource, which De l'Avignon, under the mask of kindness, often reminded him of when he would have wished to be denied it, though he had not strength to deny it himself, kept alive in all their original energy those remembrances which prudence and reason ought to have subdued.

His conduct towards his wife was regulated by the nicest sense of honor, the most undeviating attention to please and amuse her, and to hide from her observation the anguish which devoured him in secret; and she, with a heart disposed to gaiety, a temper unruffled by any passion,

and easily submitting herself to the guidance of others, accepted of his assiduities as the genuine offerings of the heart; nor suspected any thing in the dejection which he could not conceal from her but the remains of that tumultuous affliction which had overwhelmed him at his father's death, and which she ascribed wholly to filial affection. She often wondered at his apparent indifference to his daughter, and the mysterious silence that was observed in regard to his late wife. In some measure she ascribed the former to the delicacy of his attachment to herself, which, she thought, perhaps rendered him fearful of seeming to infringe on his new engagement, by cherishing too fondly this pledge of a former one; and she once or twice ventured to express a wish that he would permit *her* to be a mother to his little Adonia; but, whenever this subject was hinted at, De Bellefonde silenced her with a determined and severe air. At length she forbore urging her request, persuaded

suaded that her husband must have some proportionate motive for a conduct so foreign from his general character; while she had too firm a reliance on his affection for herself, too much artless simplicity, ever to dream of the real one, or pursue her inquiries beyond his simple negative. Through the interest of the Duc de B. and the more powerful recommendation of his own engaging manners and exalted character, which had sustained no part in the calumnies that were latterly pointed at his father, the young Marquis de Bellefonde soon rose to the highest distinctions under the new administration. From his first entrance into active life he had been universally beloved and esteemed. The bond of real friendship was indeed at this time but weak in the French court, and that which was substituted for it was in general either a league of interests or of pleasures. But De Bellefonde, although conscious that he had lost somewhat of his title to unbounded confidence, possessed in the

eyes

eyes of the world every thing that could entitle him to unlimited esteem.

His rank and connections rendered his patronage important and his favor a distinction; and, though his elegant gaiety and chastened wit, which once made him a companion equally desirable to the man of letters and the man of pleasure, were considerably subdued and meliorated into a settled gravity, an unobtrusive melancholy, which seemed to have arisen with his father's death, and now appeared to be habitual, those who had ever really loved him found that he was only the more interesting from the change; for he still retained that gentle unostentatious desire of pleasing and being useful to others which flows from genuine benevolence, and which finds its way to the hearts of the vainest and most insensible, even when unaccompanied by superior talents.—Those, who had only admired him at a distance, found new motives for esteem

esteem in the prudence and moderation of his conduct, now that he was placed in a situation the most dangerous to youth and seductive to ambition,—the avowed friend and confident of a young and powerful monarch. The sympathy that subsists between benevolent minds had attracted Louis towards De Bellefonde from the first moment of his appearance at court; but the difference of five years' seniority on the side of the latter had formerly, in a great degree, repressed the approaches of intimacy, which were farther precluded by De Bellefonde's absence from France, and his subsequent ill health. Conscious of his own inexperience, Louis sought a confidential counsellor as well as a friend; and, finding the Marquis equally well qualified to perform the part of both, the judgement of maturer years confirmed his early predilection, and he soon became his most distinguished favorite and constant companion. In his present dejection of mind, however, no man could be

be worse qualified to act the part of a courtier than De Bellefonde. It was misery to him to submit to the restraints of unmeaning ceremony; it was misery to listen with an air of interest where his heart felt none, to the unimportant topics of the fair prattlers of a drawing-room.

De Bellefonde, however, strove to subdue his disgusts, in deference to the wishes of his royal master, whom he truly loved, and who could not be satisfied unless his favorite was constantly by his side. He removed his family back to Versailles, and forced himself to a scrupulous attendance at court, vainly hoping to become reconciled by habit to a mode of life in the last degree irksome to his feelings.

He was high in administration, and the King persuaded him that his services could not possible be dispensed with. His wife enjoyed the gaieties of the court, and was sedulous to continue him there. He had

bound

bound himself to a religious observance of her wishes; it gave him comfort to see her happy: he found that this services were really important to the state, and could not bear to seem ungrateful to the King, who every day loaded him with new favors and new tokens of attachment.

Thus, with a heart pining under the load of secret griefs to which time brought no lenitive, with sentiments too refined to be satisfied with the society of the general orders of mankind, and principles revolting from every species of dissimulation, he continued to drag on a reluctant existence in the circles of frivolity and deceit; till reason could no longer restrain his disgusts, nor habit withhold him from that expression of them which is veiled by politeness.

About three years after her marriage, the Marchioness presented De Bellefonde with a son, and at the end of two years more

more paid the debt of nature in giving birth to another.—The Marquis sincerely lamented her untimely death. The amiable qualities of her heart had won his warm esteem; and, if he had never felt for her any of that impassioned tenderness which marked his attachment to Angelica, he had done ample justice to her merit, and had the consolation of reflecting, that no harshness nor unkindness of his had ever given her a momentary pang. He now determined to bring home his daughter, who still remained in the retirement where he had placed her at her mother's death, that he might himself superintend her education, and direct the openings of her young mind.

But he preferred placing his children in his house at Paris, because this would furnish him with an excuse for spending less of his time at Versailles, and because the former was in the immediate neighbourhood of his relation, the Marchioness

ness d'Estreaux, a woman of uncommon worth and accomplishments, who offered to take a maternal charge of them. The Marchioness was peculiarly well qualified to form the sentiments of the young Adonia, after the model which De Bellefonde. having neglected himself, found too late to be most essential to happiness. Adonia had at this time just entered her sixth year, and had seen her father so seldom, that, when he came to conduct her home, and told her that she was to go with him to Paris, she wept bitterly, and entreated him not to take her away from her dear Madame Brumelle, whom, she said, she loved much better than him, and would not be parted from.

The mourner, who adds the glow of romantic sensibility to the ordinary feelings of humanity, takes delight in tracing out the features of the object he laments in every face that seems fair or interesting.

De

De Bellefonde had often searched for a resemblance to her lamented mother in the sparkling countenance of the little Adonia, though fancy alone had hitherto assisted him to discover it; but, when he saw her hang her head and weep, the pensive beauties of his lost Angelica spoke in every line of her infantine face, and recalled the bitter story of his loss in traces as strong as the review of yesterday.—Five years had rolled over his head since that event, in a smiling variety of pleasures, of affluence, of honors, of every thing that could obliterate the past, and prompt expectation to look forward with delight; but the warm fancy, the romantic sentiment, the enthusiastic love, which he had so fatally cherished in early youth, and which had robed Angelica in charms more than mortal, had gained too strong an ascendency over the native vigor of his mind to be dissipated either by the insinuations of pleasure or the allurements of ambition,

while

while any of the energies of youth remained. Her death had, if possible, increased their influence; and the succeeding events, which had forced him to support a still-more difficult plan of deception than that into which his first error had precipitated him, far from dissolving the recollection of the past, had to his romantic imagination given her other and stronger claims to his perpetual remembrance; though, as there was a necessity for that remembrance being confined to his own bosom, he had forced himself to stifle it, when duty to his second wife required the sacrifice, or when engaged in hateful intercourse with the world. He was now forced from that engagement; which, notwithstanding it was induced by the strongest heroism of filial piety, had always reproached his breast as a violation of the sacred respect he conceived to be due to the memory of the first object of his vows; and his child, from whom he had alienated

himself

himself from the purest motives of duty, was, now that these motives existed no longer, still dearer to his heart in consequence of the painful separation. It was in vain that reason pointed out the errors of imagination, and represented to his mind the folly of cherishing remembrances fatal to his peace. "But for the unfortunate attachment which he had been so studious to inspire her with, Angelica had perhaps still lived, happy and contented with the lot to which he found her destined.—But for the specious sophistry with which he had overpowered her tenderness and seduced her from truth, she might have learned to reconcile herself to his loss, and triumphed in the consciousness of integrity." When the illusions of passion were no more, he had found that it was not principle, but love, which had urged his assiduity for her conversion; for, though he contemned that system of religious faith which caused her scruples against becoming his, the bias

bias of education taught him to despise still more a violation of honor.—"*He* had been that violator; through *his* persuasions, Angelica had broken her faith, and the guilt of perjury belonged less to the unhappy aspostate than to him who had instigated a conduct at which *she* had shuddered even in the act, which had embittered her remaining life, and hastened her untimely death!" These self-accusations now crouded upon him with new vigor at the sight of his child, whose resemblance to her mother wrought like a warning talisman on his remorse, while it rendered more dear and binding the ties of parental affection. In embracing and weeping over her, he experienced anguish and distraction little inferior to those which had overwhelmed him when his *first* Adonia was torn from him for ever. The increased dejection he returned with to Versailles, though by some it was attributed to his wife's recent death, gave those, who had considered

sidered his marriage with her as a mere engagement of interest, a new subject of conjecture; and, as they observed that it began with the return of his daughter, they naturally ascribed it to those mysterious circumstances in his first engagement which had formerly caused so much speculation, though curiosity had at this time long been wearing off the fruitless inquiry. The Marquis de Bellefonde now spent most of his time with his children: he, who was once so constant in his attendance at court, now rarely appeared there, except when the business of his office obliged him to wait for private conferences with the king, or required his repairing thither to meet with some of the other ministers; and, when at such times he occasionally mingled with the gay circles who basked in the sunshine of court-pleasures, he was harassed by perplexing questions or frivolous expressions of sympathy, which he neither credited nor desired. A gloom

hung

hung around him which no exertion could dissipate, nor any farther concealment attempt to hide; and the natural urbanity of his disposition no longer restrained him from giving a loose to the disgust he felt at the impertinent curiosity and unfeeling raillery by which he was beset. This weakened the influence of his virtues, and many who had been attached to him merely from motives of ambition disdained to brook the coldness or (as they termed it) haughtiness of his manners: while those who had courted him for the pleasure of his conversation, or the elegance of his entertainment, gradually forsook him as the former lost its charm, and the latter became less the resort of the gay and the dissipated. A court-favorite holds his popularity by a very precarious tenure. De Bellefonde had lost that engaging affability of manners, that appearance of interest in the concerns of all, which most effectually secures it; and, in proportion as he perceived the effects

of this loss, the original cause gained a stronger ascendency.—More and more disgusted with the world, and offended by the discovered inconstancy or perfidiousness of his supposed friends, he became in reality what he had hitherto only worn the external semblance of, haughty and disdainful. The king, who was attached to him with fraternal affection, knew not at first how to reconcile himself to this extraordinary change, which, though gradual in its progress, had risen to too great a height for his partiality to overlook. At one time he was induced to give ear to the malicious insinuation of his favorite's enemies, who hinted at remorse for some hidden crime: at another, acquainted as he was with De Bellefonde's elevation of sentiment, he could not forbear imagining that the intoxication of power had perverted the natural candor of his mind, and produced in him that self-importance and false pride of rank which he saw exemplified

in

in so many instances around him from the same cause. Neither of these suggestions however could obtain a permanent hold in the King's mind. De Bellefonde's unfeigned detestation of every species of turpitude silenced the former; and, though the latter was apparently more demonstrable, his original sentiments were so foreign from pride, and his deep dejection so incompatible with vanity or the arrogance of adventitious elevation, that the King soon became persuaded that his change of manners proceeded rather from pride *wounded* than elated. He saw clearly that some hidden grief preyed upon his mind; but, as De Bellefonde studiously evaded his inquiries, and even betrayed a degree of impatience whenever the topic was introduced, he ceased to urge it to him, and only lamented that a mind so exalted should be depressed by any affliction which he possessed not the power to alleviate. De Bellefonde was still the affectionate friend, the faithful

 servant,

servant, and the judicious counsellor, of his sovereign; inflexible in justice, and studious to promote the interests of his country. No domestic cares ever impeded his public duties, no private sorrows ever interfered with the scrupulous discharge of these; and the King, far from condemning his obstinate silence on the subject of his secret griefs, admired him the more for a forbearance which he now imagined to be the result of that magnanimity which despises the ebullitions of a fruitless regret. He once indeed had let fall an expression which on reflection confirmed the King in this opinion. It was during some court-cabal which needed all De Bellefonde's firmness and impartiality to repress, when the King, talking with him of indifferent matters, suddenly adverted to the affair in agitation, and lamented that he who seemed involved in sorrows of his own should be so often harassed with adjusting the differences of others.

"Sire,"

"Sire," replied he with unusual coldness, "the sorrows of the individual are but as a grain of sand to the ocean : they are peculiarly his own, and ought never to intrude upon the quiet of o hers; much less are they worthy of coming in competition with what a man owes to the community."—Ever more ready to lean to the side of clemency than of condemnation in his decisions on the motives of others, the King embraced with sincere pleasure every conjecture which spoke favorably of the man whom he loved; and, if De Rosier lost some *summer*-friends by the growing chillness of his deportment, and the haughty distance with which he repulsed their sycophant intrusions on his notice, he gained a warmer friend, a more zealous advocate, in the benevolent Louis; who, attached to him through all the revolutions of his manners, found a new and warmer claim on his sympathy in the severity of that hidden sorrow which

 could

could have wrought such a change on a character once equally insinuating and animated.

CHAP. IX.

My heart had still some foolish fondness for thee;
But hence! 'tis gone! I give it to the winds!

AT the death of the Marchioness de Bellefonde, her large fortune had devolved upon her husband without any limitation; and this fortune, except a small estate in Normandy which he inherited from his father, was all that the Marquis could properly call his own; for he was not of a disposition to accumulate wealth by the emoluments of his situation,

situation, and the pensions that he received from government were annexed to his posts, and with them were liable to be withdrawn.

With his usual sense of justice, he had immediately made a will in favor of his two sons by the Marchioness, equally dividing between them the reversion of the whole of their mother's fortune, without appropriating the smallest portion of it to Adonia; who, he conceived, was not entitled to deprive the Marchioness's children of any part of their mother's wealth. Meanwhile his wife's generosity had possessed him of an affluence which rendered him independent of all court-favor, and he looked forward with impatience to the period when he might honourably withdraw from office, in the hope of spending the remainder of his days in some retirement more congenial to his feelings, and better adapted to the exercise of those

 mild

mild virtues which were the favorite impulses of his heart.

It was now his chief solace to indulge his fancy with the anticipation of this future retirement; but this he found was unattainable at present, both from the critical state of political affairs, and from the King's increasing reliance on his exertions.

In order that he might still devote himself in the best manner to the service of his fellow-creatures, he proposed to fix on some secluded spot for his retreat, he thought, where the inhabitants were as yet immersed in the barbarity of ignorance, or the degradation of unregulated passion; where he could instruct a portion of mankind who needed it in the benefits of civilization without its vices, and the right use of reason without any of its sophistries or prejudices. In imagination, he formed around him a little grate-

ful

ful community of the poor, whom he had relieved from poverty and taught the value of industry; and the converted, whom he had reclaimed from vice, and brought back to happiness. It was not self-complacency, it was rapture that inspired his heart, as he contemplated the picture! but, when he turned his eyes on the drama that was acting immediately before him, when he saw selfish interests occupying every mind, reason made the tool of profligacy, and civilization degenerated into licentiousness, the nearness of the view rendered it shocking and disgusting to him. He forgot that *here* was a much-wider field for the exertions of a generous and impartial nature; and, still panting after the manner of being useful as well as the happiness unpossessed, he only regarded the beings around him with a proud consciousness of his own superiority; while, lamenting that his cares should be wasted on im practicable objects, the oftener he con-

trasted them with those of his imagination, the more ardently he longed to be set free from them, and placed in a more congenial office than that of constitutional administration. Human beneficence, however exalted, must be nourished by acknowledgement, or it will inevitably languish: it belongs only to a superior nature to be kind to ingratitude, and pour benefits untired on those who think not of the benefactor. De Bellefonde was never so happy as when assisting others, either by his purse or his services; but, though he always found the courtiers sedulous to obtain his favors, and lavish of their *pre*-acknowledgements of his goodness, it was forgotten as soon as used; nay, his very *person* forgotten, if they found it unnecessary to keep up the forms only of acquaintance; and sometimes these men would avail themselves of his interest to disentangle their own difficulties, and then leave him in the snare from which he had aided

aided their escape. "Perfidious, unprincipled, monsters!" cried he indignantly, worn out at length by repeated instances of this kind, "pampered by voluptuousness and selfishness till they have obliterated every feeling that rescues human nature from brutality, I will be kind to them no longer. I renounce, I abjure, them for ever! Oh! when shall I be at liberty to devote myself to modest worth and genuine gratitude! to nourish the social virtues in nature, which are as yet unadulterated by luxury, or are only culpable through ignorance! to diffuse instruction and happiness where they will be gratefully received and modestly enjoyed! No vain aristocrate shall rear his proud dwelling, or diffuse his baneful example, near our peaceful and innocent retirement; no haughty tyrant, who creates privileges of his own on the basis of prejudice or erroneous custom, and enforces them by the arbitrary arm of power, shall approach *there!* I will teach

my fellow-creatures that they are men, but not tyrants; free, but not insubordinate; for true freedom is not an exemption from all law; it only implies, that the government under which we live is contrived for the best, and that the restrictions to which we all concur in submitting have been found necessary for the general well-being of society. The sense of our moral equality generates a proper independence, and neither supposes a natural equality which does not exist, nor requires an equality of fortune which can never be maintained: it only places the mind above tyranny, and informs it of its proper value, while it submits the conduct to the laws of the community as the true test of social duty. —Oh! when shall I be at liberty to inculcate these doctrines, without opposition, where they will be received with conviction, where they will be encouraged and adopted with the fervor of unprejudiced reason! When shall I be enabled

abled to withdraw from this hateful court!"

By such reveries De Bellefonde was perpetually occupied, till, about a year after his second wife's death, he was surprised by receiving a letter from a Madame Raimond, who called herself a cousin of the late Marchioness, and informed him that she held a right of succession to her whole fortune,—that fortune by means of which he expected to rear his Utopia!

The intelligence was a blow that jarred through every part of De Bellefonde's frame; but he read the letter a second time with more deliberation. It was couched in terms simple, modest, and affecting. The claimant said, that she was pressed by singular misfortunes, or she would not have presumed to trouble him by mentioning a claim which had so long laid dormant; especially as she acknowledged

ledged that she could bring no living witnesses to attest it. Her proofs of its validity, she said, were however sufficiently convincing. She was the niece by marriage of the Comtesse de Montvilliers, the lady who had bequeathed her large fortune to Mademoiselle de la Voitière, (the late Marchioness de Bellefonde,) and had been educated by her as her intended heir. But at the instigation of the friends of Mademoiselle de la Voitière, who was her own niece, she had made a second will, and revoked the former one, in her favor, Madame Raimond having offended her by an imprudent marriage. That, in her last illness, finding that she (Madame Raimond) was in extreme indigence, and feeling all her former affection return for her, together with some peculiar reason which had partly instigated her unkind treatment, she had sent for her, and restored the first will, only altering its date to the present time. She died immediately after this

this act, before it could be well confirmed. Madame Raimond held the last-signed will in her own hands; that in favor of Mademoiselle de la Voitière was found among the old lady's sealed papers. Mademoiselle de la Voitière had powerful friends; Madame Raimond was in indigence and obscurity. The Duc de B. had established the claims of the former; those of the latter were treated as an imposture. She had no redress to fly to; she was powerless herself, and she retired from the vain contest. Her husband being at this time absent from her, she determined to conceal from him the expectations that had been given her, that he might not share her disappointment, nor be tempted to engage in a hopeless litigation, which he had neither interest nor money to support. Since then they had experienced many changes of fortune; and, being at present in the utmost distress, she had lately been induced to inform her husband of the will which

which she had so long kept him ignorant of, in order to consult with him whether there was a possibility of obtaining relief through this means.

Acquainted with the well-known goodness of the Marquis de Bellefonde, he had advised her, she said, to open their case to him, but to appeal rather to his humanity than his justice; for an unattested claim like theirs could scarcely be deemed worthy of notice, much less of acknowledgment, and they only desired a a small provision from the Marquis's bounty.

De Bellefonde was moved even to tears, as he read the letter a second time, by the plaintive simplicity with which modest merit set forth its distresses. His more extensive schemes of benevolence were forgotten; the hope of soothing his own sorrows in retirement was superseded; he thought only of relieving

Madame

Madame Raimond. But, that he might not do injustice to his children by too hastily yielding to the impulses of compassion, he determined to inquire into the truth of her statement before he proceeded to answer her claim; and to this end he first desired to see her. She came to him immediately upon the knowledge of his wish. She appeared to be a woman about seven and twenty years of age; tall, and of a carriage uncommonly dignified; and she was dressed in deep mourning, having lately lost at one stroke two darling children. She wept when she mentioned it;—but her grief was not violent. She was thin and pale, and her sable dress made her appear still more so. De Bellefonde was a physiognomist; but he was here rather a sympathetic observer than one guided by system. But Aristotle himself would have pronounced the expression of Madame Raimond's countenance to be incapable of deceit; and, on a closer investigation, the

the calm dark eye, the broad open brow, the noble and well-defined nose, the mouth "firm and placid," curved by no lurking lines of passion nor dissimulation, were all features which De Bellefonde thought could not easily be mistook, and belonged only to a virtuous and sincere mind. After he had assured her of welcome, and soothed her by expressions of kindness, he requested to be informed what were the misfortunes to which she alluded in her letter, and whether his interest as well as his purse might not be useful to her. He was predisposed to sympathise in every word she should utter, and he begged her to be circumstantial, that he might clearly comprehend the nature of her claims.

"We are all apt to suppose our own misfortunes the severest," said she in a soft and low voice: "and yet I think candor must allow that mine have fallen peculiarly heavy upon *me*, though per-

haps

haps not uncommon in themselves. Educated in prosperity, and acquainted only with ease and happiness, I scarcely had thought of misfortune when I first became unfortunate; and, accustomed from my infancy to kindness and respect, I drooped helpless and terrified before unfeeling reproof and coarse familiarity. But adversity certainly teaches us our own strength. It robs us perhaps of some outward ornaments when it forces us to associate with those beneath us, but it matures patience and fortitude, and all the more useful virtues; its productions have the superiority of autumn over summer; the one is decorated by the blossoms, the other brings forth the fruit. But I am running into a moralizing strain, when I meant only to narrate. Pardon the interruption, my Lord. The unfortunate are strangely garrulous." "No one need apologize, madam, for sentiments so just," said De

Bellefonde;

Bellefonde: "proceed as you please, I must listen to you with sympathy."

"I have told you," said she, "that I was educated by the Comtesse de Montvilliers. I was an orphan, and entirely dependent on her; yet I never knew a want nor a wish ungratified until I left her. Simply ensnared by the unfortunate predilection which has caused all my subsequent distresses, I nevertheless ought not to blame myself for an attachment which was due to worth. My Raimond has ever been the best of husbands,—imprudent and perhaps faulty as he was in his choice, weighing it by the established rules of custom. He was the tenant of a humble cottage, but uncommonly endowed by nature both with mental and personal gifts; and, attracted by his beauty, as she said, when he was yet a boy, the Comtesse de Montvilliers took him into her family, and gave him a good education under her own eye. He passed

passed through several gradations in her service, but was always near her person, and distinguished by attentions which are seldom paid to domestics. It was this perhaps that early nourished those aspiring sentiments which, though founded on conscious excellence, are deemed too presumptuous to be tolerated in inferior stations. At eighteen years of age he was placed more immediately about the Comtesse's person, attended her when she went abroad rather as a companion than a servant, gave her his arm when she walked out, (for she was now too feeble to walk without assistance,) and read to her in her own apartment, when only she and I were there together. My heart had cherished an unconscious affection for him from the first opening of reason. We lived so secluded from the world, that I knew little of its customs, and still less of the importance annexed to the distinctions of rank. I saw nobody so amiable as Raimond, and therefore I loved him best;

best; but I was wholly ignorant that this was any other than a sisterly attachment, till it was too deeply imprinted on my heart to be easily removed. He was nineteen, and I but sixteen, when one day, while we were alone together, I observed that his eyes fixed mournfully upon me, and he sighed deeply. I simply asked what had vexed him, and said I would tell my aunt if any body had been saucy to him, which was often the case from the jealousy he excited among the servants. I cannot call *him* a servant, for indeed he was never considered as such, and his mind was too exalted for any thing commonly annexed to the name. I repeated my inquiry, whether he had received insolence from any of the servants. He blushed deeply, and looked down for some moments. "Alas, no!" said he at length; "every body is too kind to me, and I forget my humble station, and aspire still higher!" He gave me a timid but eloquent glance, which I felt en-

ter

ter my very soul, and instantly left me. I had read the language of love in romances, though till this moment I had formed no notion of its nature. A confused idea that *I* was the object to whom he aspired rushed upon my mind, and the thoughts of being beloved by Raimond filled and elated my simple bosom with unutterable delight. I might have mistook however, and a few moments' reflection mingled my pleasure with disquiet. The difference of our ranks did not once occur to me, for I was not sensible of it, and in the distinctions of mind I acknowledged him my superior. I longed yet dreaded to meet him again: I threw myself in his way several times, but always fled with trembling agitation the instant he approached me; and many weeks elapsed without our again exchanging words. But I could not endure this uncertainty; and I formed a thousand stratagems to obtain a more perfect knowledge of the state of his heart, which

which I always found myself too conscious to put in execution. My romances had taught me, that love was often the inspirer of poetry, and I had seen several little songs of Raimond's composing. One day, when he was abroad with my aunt, I stole softly to his chamber, and explored every corner of it, in hopes of finding some memorial of myself. I took up a book at last, within the leaves of which I found with inexpressible delight a sonnet that I was certain alluded to no one but myself: for, though I was not directly mentioned in it, my name was on the outside of the paper, and my cipher inscribed on various parts of the book. I still remember it distinctly, for it made an impression on me which can never be effaced; and, if you will not think me too minute, my Lord, I will repeat it to you."

'Your story deeply engages my interest," said the Marquis. "I know not," continued

continued he musingly after a short pause, "whether we ought to approve of *any* innovation of the established rules of society; but, certainly, if any thing *can* excuse incroachments of this kind, or reconcile a forbidden connexion, it is a pure and artless love, such as you describe; I shall be favored by hearing your sonnet." "It was addressed to his Blackbird," said Madame Raimond, "a little tame favorite that was allowed to rove about at liberty. It would sometimes leave him for days together; but it always returned to him, as if sensible that it found none in the world so good as Raimond.

Lend me thy joyous pipe, that I may sing
Like thee, sweet bird, with gay untroubled breast;
Lend me, sweet bird, thy bold excursive wing,
That I may fly from *her* who spoils my rest.

Ah! merry warbler, *thou* didst never know
The sting of thought, that bids an anguish live;
Thy inauspicious aim ne'er nurs'd a woe
Beyond the moment that did impulse give.

To me each moment, ling'ring as it goes,
Imparts another pang of hopeless grief;
For still the cause from whence my suff'ring flows
Clings to my heart, and banishes relief!—
Ah! spring that prompts thy warblings cheers not me;
Nor could thy borrow'd pinions set me free.

" I could not prevail on myself to replace this precious paper where I had found it; and at length, boldly determining to keep it, whatever might be the consequence, I put it in my bosom, and, retiring to my aunt's room, sat myself down quietly at work to wait her return. *Her* return! ah, no! I thought not of her; but was not Raimond with her,—the being who seemed to me the *first* in the creation?

" The Comtesse came, but not Raimond. Though severely disappointed when she entered without him, some reluctant feelings, which I could not account for, prevented my inquiring what was become of him. Night came, but no Raimond; another day and another night, but still I gained

I gained no tidings of him. My aunt did not once name him, and the servants could tell me nothing of his destiny. Weeks passed away in this ignorance, and love was nourished by uncertainty.

"I was miserable and wept in secret, and before the Comtesse my sighs *would* burst forth, in spite of my struggles to keep them down; my colour faded, and my appetite forsook me; I was for ever restless, always leaving the spot I was in to seek in vain in some other to escape from my uneasiness. But my aunt never remembered these symptoms, and still forbore to mention Raimond. At length, as I wandered alone at some distance from the house, I saw the poor youth walking slowly among the trees. His hat was off, his hair disordered, and his whole dress so neglected, that, added to the paleness of his countenance, I stood some moments in doubt whether it could possibly be him. I met his eye,

 and

and, instantly flying towards him, caught his hand with artless affection: my questions were too eager to wait for his replies. "Where have you been, Raimond?—why have you so strangely absented yourself? and what is the reason that the Comtesse never speaks of you now as she used to do?—Are you ill?—Ah! why are you so pale? Speak, Raimond, I beseech you, and tell me the cause of all this mystery." "*You are the cause!*" replied he, in a tone which I thought strangely unkind; "I wish to heaven I had never seen you!" "Ah! why do you wish so, Raimond?" cried I, bursting into tears, stung by the bitter sincerity with which he pronounced these words: "you are very ungrateful if you wish so. I have done nothing but weep since you went away." "You look indeed very pale," said he, fixing his eyes upon me; and now he also burst into weeping. He drew me to a little distance, to a place were we were less

less in danger of being observed; for he told me, that, if my aunt heard of our having been together, she would never forgive him, since it was on *my account* that she had banished him. I could not comprehend why the Comtesse should be angry with Raimond for loving me, or with me for returning his love. He explained to me the pride of rank and ancestry: my heart knew no such distinctions, and my reason refused to acknowledge their importance.

"In modest and affecting terms, Raimond told me, that they had indeed no power over the mind; that the consciousness of his inferior birth could not change the current of his affections; that he could never cease to love me. He hoped nothing, however, he said; he only intreated that I would not forget him. I told him that to forget him was not in my power. A girl of sixteen does not think it in nature that the

memory of a beloved object can ever be erased from her mind; but, indeed, where is the heart that can *forget* its affections? Long after the *sentiment* of love is extinguished, the memory of it remains; it is too pleasing a recollection to be ever wholly relinquished. I need not detain your attention to this part of my narrative. After several more private meetings, love and igorance of the world overcame my few scruples, and I eloped with Raimond. We were immediately married, and I was then urgent to return to the Comtesse, to ask her pardon and blessing: but this my husband strongly opposed; assuring me, that, if I did so, it must be at the hazard of being separated from him for ever. The large fortune, which might have been ours had I obtained a reconciliation with my aunt, was to the generous youth of no moment, when weighed against the dread of losing me; and, imagining that I could live happily in the poorest cottage with

with my Raimond, and delighted thus to have proved the disinterestedness of his affection, I yielded to his remonstrances, and determined not to risk the consequences of an application to the Comtesse. But, alas! I soon experienced all the hardships of indigence, even though my beloved Raimond was by my side.

"Unaccustomed to the commonest toil, the fatigue I was obliged to submit to, (for we could afford to keep only one servant,) and the pain of finding myself an alien from my friends, and utterly cast off as a thing unworthy by one or two of my former companions, to whom I had disclosed my situation in confidence, preyed on my health and spirits, and threw me into an alarming and lingering illness. My Raimond redoubled his tender assiduities. He worked night and day to procure for me those indulgences which my situation now doubly required; for, to add to my distress, and indeed my

spirits were quite unstrung, I found that another dear but painful link would soon be added to our mutual affection, which would awaken new cares and plunge us into new expences. The dear babe when it arrived proved indeed an accumulation of perplexity to us. I was too weak to nurse it myself; and, though we could not afford to hire a nurse into the house, even by discharging our other servants, I could not bear to send my child away from me. Born in sorrow, deprived of its natural sustenance, it languished a weak and sickly object, demanding our constant attendance and fostering continual anxiety for near a year, when it pleased heaven to take it away from us. But its death was a severe stroke to us: methinks we are more unwilling to lose a poor sickly plant, which we have tried in vain to prop, than the healthy and robust ones which give us no care. We had lived two years in our poor cottage, when one evening, as he was returning from work,

work, Raimond was overtaken on the high road by one of the Comtesse's servants, who immediately recollected and accosted him. I was extremely alarmed when he related the circumstances; and still more so, when next day the Comtesse herself came to us. She embraced us both, however, with tender affection; and in particular I remarked, that, when Raimond knelt to implore her pardon, she stooped over him, and, kissing his forehead with fervor, burst into tears. We were overjoyed by her unexpected kindness, but our pleasure was of short duration: she soon put on an air of coldness and severity. "It is impossible, Teresa," said she to me, "that I can ever adopt you again in my family, after degrading yourself as you have done. Had you married any body but my servant, I might probably have forgiven you, and reinstated you in your former expectations; but I cannot leave my fortune to one who will never be received again by the world. I will take care

to provide against your future indigence, but my public countenance you cannot have, and must be satisfied without, as a punishment for your extreme folly and imprudence."

"With these words he left us, having first put into Raimond's hands a purse containing fifty louis d'ors. This was to us a mine of wealth. We repaired our cottage, and made it more commodious; and, after having furnished ourselves with several necessaries which we had long wanted, and which were to us the height of luxury, we had still twenty louis left. But one night, while my husband was absent on business at a distant town, some ruffians broke into the house, and robbed us of our remaining wealth, together with every thing they could find that was portable, leaving me half dead with terror locked into a narrow closet, where I had scarcely room to breathe, and our poor simple servant-girl tied to a table in the kitchen, and in strong con-

convulsions. What a sight for poor Raimond when he returned next morning! The fright, added to my weak state of health, for I was again pregnant, brought on a miscarriage, and my life was despaired of. Raimond had no money to procure a physician; and, almost distracted by the dread of losing me, he wrote an incoherent letter to the Comtesse, informing her of our misfortune, and imploring her farther succour. The letter never reached her. She was confined to a sick bed, and those about her took care that her bounty should not be thrown away on a discarded favorite. I recovered however almost miraculously, and soon enjoyed more confirmed health than I had long experienced. But the blessings of health and mutual affection could not ward off the gathering evils of poverty, and we were forced to separate. Raimond had been offered an employment in the house of a rich merchant in Paris; and the situation held out so many advantages, that he resolved to

accept of it. Our maid would not leave us, though we had no longer any wages for her; and it gave my husband some comfort to think that I should still be attended by this faithful creature in his absence. It was a sad parting however,—our first separation! We were young, and found all the world in each other's society; and, indeed, when the time arrived, it seemed laden with death; but this was a slight trial compared to what followed. Raimond was but just gone, when I was surprised by a summons from my aunt to come to her immediately. I sent my maid home to her friends, locked up my house, and sat out. I found the Comtesse dying, but she received me with the kindest welcome. She told me that she had never tasted peace since I left her; bewailed her unkindness to me, and implored my pardon for having sacrificed so much to the opinion of the world. "But, alas!" said she, "well might I dread the world's censures,—Raimond is my son!" "As I knew she had had no child by her husband,

band, and had been but once married, this intelligence shocked me much more than I can express. I felt no pleasure at the idea of his being allied to nobility in a manner which disgraced his parents, and I shrunk with horror from the poor enfeebled woman who made this strange unexpected confession. I could not dissemble; for, oh! what a blow is it to discover guilt in one whom we have been accustomed to venerate! She saw what were my feelings; her remorse grew more better; she attempted to explain her story, to give me her reasons for her harsh treatment of us; but I could only gather from her disjointed expressions a confirmation of her guilt, and that she had discarded Raimond under pretence of having discovered that he loved me, when in fact she hardly even suspected it, only to controvert a report which had lately been circulated respecting his real birth. She put into my hands the will she had first made, in which she named me

me her sole heir, saying, that the conjectures or comments of the world were no longer of importance to a woman on the brink of eternity. She directed me where to find the other will, in favor of Madame de la Voitière, which she desired me to bring to her and destroy. I was preparing to obey her, when she suddenly gave a convulsive scream, and in a few minutes died in my arms. The agitation occasioned by our meeting had hastened her end, and I was left just in the critical period when another minute or two would have destroyed Madame de la Voitière's claims, and established mine. I was suffered to remain in the house, and treated with civility enough till after the funeral. From a perhaps-overstrained delicacy, though I knew where the other will was deposited, and had her orders for destroying it, I could not prevail on myself to touch it now, as I had no longer her presence to authorise me; but, indeed, I did not suppose that the validity of the paper which

which I held could possibly be disputed: I found it otherwise. The Comtesse's brother, the Duc de B. took upon him the opening of her papers, and declared Madame de la Voitière her heir. I then came forward, and produced my claim. It was regarded with contempt. The witnesses mentioned in the will were no where to be found, and several of the people in the house declared that no such persons had ever existed in *their* knowledge, and that they had lived with the Comtesse since a period long before my birth. I was branded as an impostor, though known by the Duc and every servant in the house as the niece of the late Comte de Montvilliers, from whom all this contested fortune was derived; and, after having been paid a small legacy which was assigned to me in the *established* will, I was discarded with ignominy, and commanded never to trouble any of the family again; for that, "whoever had been my father, the wife of Monsieur Raimond, the

the Comtesse's valet, was no associate for people of quality." I knew it was in vain to resist this injustice, for it was stamped by the high hand of power; but I remained some days in the neighbourhood, vainly hoping to gain tidings of the two persons who I knew had been present at the signing of *my* will; but they had left the country, and nobody could tell me any thing concerning them. I sat out homewards, disappointed and spiritless; but I was not ambitious. Custom had reconciled me to my humble station, and I soon comforted myself with the reflection that we were no worse off than we had been, and that I had still my beloved Raimond to make light the burden of labour. I thanked God that my health was restored, and that I could now work for myself. With the pittance therefore which I had received from the Duc de B. I determined to repair our cottage once more, and embellish it against my husband's return, while I would also endeavour

deavour to add to our scanty income by taking in needle-work of the commonest kinds, in which I was become tolerably expert. With these thoughts my disappointment was soon entirely at an end, and I hastened on my journey home.

"But there was no home for me to come to! I looked about in vain for our sweet though humble dwelling. It was razed to the ground, and scarcely one trace remained of it! Fatigued with my journey, which had been performed on foot, and quite dispirited by this unforeseen misfortune, I sat down upon some stones, and wept bitterly; my bonnet fell off as I rested my head upon my hands, and my long hair, which was at that time strikingly fine, fell in disordered ringlets over my face. I suppose I must have made a picturesque appearance, sitting thus mournfully among the ruins of my house, which was situated in the skirts of a romantic wood, and so near a small lake, that

that my figure was reflected in it. A gentleman, who had left his carriage on the high road, and came here with his gun in pursuit of some game, observed and came up to me. He began by asking me whether there were many birds in these woods? I looked up through my tears, hardly comprehending what he said, and, recollecting his features, I knew him to be the Baron de Vernon, a relation of the Duc de B.'s, who used sometimes to visit my aunt. He did not however know me, and somehow, feeling ashamed of my humble appearance, I determined not to discover myself to him. He seemed affected by my tears, and inquired whether he could relieve me, in a voice so gentle and soothing, that my heart instantly recognized him as a friend. I had never felt kindness so valuable, nor hope so quick springing, as at this moment, when, left to myself in the world in a manner, I had not another soul near to pity or assist me. I was but eighteen too, and my heart

heart was a stranger to suspicion; but when he offered to take me with him to Paris, where I told him my husband was, and that I wished to go to him, how joyfully did I put myself under his protection!

,, But, alas! his designs were neither honorable nor kind. Instead of taking me to my husband, he carried me to his country-seat near Versailles, and used every art to seduce my affections; while he kept me in such close confinement, that I had not even power to inform Raimond that I was alive. Think, my Lord, what *he* must have suffered, when during eight months he was ignorant of my fate! But I was not all that time with the base young man who had deceived me. I found means to escape, while he was absent at court, through the assistance of a country-girl who happened to know me, and I travelled on foot to Paris; thankful to heaven that I had escaped uninjured from the

the snares of a cruel seducer, who would have deprived me of all that I valued on earth besides my Raimond!

"Alas! my innocence was indeed all that was left me. Raimond had quitted the house of his employer in search of me, and nobody could direct me where to find him.

"It is not easy to tell you all the hardships and insults I had now to struggle against.—I was alone in a great city; I had not one friend to apply to; I met not a soul who took pity on my youth and misfortunes. Madame de la Voitière was not then married, and I knew not where she lived, or I would now have applied to her; for, though she was quite a child when I lived with the Comtesse de Montvilliers, I thought that he could not already have forgotten me, and remembered her of a gentle and compassionate nature. I found no compassionate

passionate natures here. But with a thin and slight form, and a face which in those days was accounted more than ordinarily handsome, I was forced to toil from morning till night, (for I determined to save what I could of my little fortune for my husband,) and was hourly exposed to the insults of improper addresses. At length, quite discouraged by these accumulating embarrassments, which I had only submitted to in the idea of being in the way of hearing tidings of my husband, by remaining near the house of his employer, I sat out for St. Denis, where Raimond's nominal parents resided; thinking it not improbable that he might come thither, and at any rate expecting that they would be kind to me for his sake.

"I was not deceived. They were people of coarse minds, and still coarser manners, but they were not insensible to the feelings of humanity: they were as kind to me as they could be, yet it was but

but a rude sympathy. I stayed with them near two months, and at length Raimond indeed appeared. My heart was warm, unconscious of evil, and overjoyed by his arrival. He expressed no pleasure at seeing me. Disdain and suspicion overspread his fine glowing countenance, and all my former sufferings were light compared to the anguish inflicted by his coldness. He had heard that I had lived four or five months with the Baron de Vernon on the most disgraceful terms: he knew his profligate character, and though he could scarcely credit the report, his heart was deeply wounded by it. The first word I uttered confirmed it; and, without deigning to bestow another look upon me, he left the house. I thought I should have died by this cruel stab! The people of the house joined in Raimond's indignation, and declared that they would no longer harbour me. They loaded me with shocking epithets that froze my very soul; but

they could not turn me out to die, and I sank into a state of insensibility which was succeeded by a raging fever. When I recovered my recollection, I found myself carefully nursed, and attended by a doctor. Raimond had been there. He was now convinced of my innocence; but he had imprudently fought with the Baron de Vernon, who was supposed to be dying of his wounds. My husband had escaped to Austrian Flanders, and had called at St. Denis in his way, and directed that I should follow him, as soon as I was able to travel. I recovered my strength and joined him.—He had got together a little money from the earnings of his late employment, and I had still the greatest part of my legacy untouched. We settled in business at Staden, and lived in comfort for near four years, in which time I was the mother of two sweet children." She paused a moment, as if overcome by the recollection, and then proceeded: "I know not what evil influence tempted

tempted my husband to go to Paris; but about this time he grew weary of our residence. It had indeed few attractions, exclusive of our domestic comforts.

"The inhabitants of Staden, with whom our situation obliged us to associate, were to the last degree vulgar and illiterate. They had not minds suited to those who had seen better days, and I agreed with my husband in wishing a change of residence; but I had an instinctive horror at Paris. Raimond's will however always guided me, and we came hither. The Baron de Vernon had recovered from his wounds, and we had nothing to apprehend on this account. Raimond procured employment in the same mercantile house where he had been before, and in a year or two was admitted to a share in the business. He was of a sanguine and enterprising temper, and he was led away to stake our whole fortune on a speculative adventure, which, if successful, would have

have raised us at once to independence and affluence; but it failed, and we were plunged into worse than poverty! The house was entirely crushed, its members dispersed, and Raimond *was* thrown into prison for debts which he had never incurred, and was utterly unable to pay. Imprisonment to an active mind is worse than its cage to the sprightly bird, accustomed to mount the sky, or sweep the distant country at will;—but unjust imprisonment to a proud spirit!—this makes the iron fetters jagged, and cankers the very soul! My poor Raimond was gentle as an infant to the voice of kindness, but resentful of injury, indignant to unjust oppression, as the rouzed lion. His resentment was impotent, his indignation unavailing; they only recoiled upon himself, and still more embittered a loathsome confinement of above three years.

"I was forced to work for my children and myself, and also to support my husband,

band, for the sustenance allowed by the prison was scanty and wretched indeed. I ventured to apply once or twice to the Duc de B. but was repulsed with scorn, and I could not see Mademoiselle de la Voitière, who was now your wife, as she resided constantly at Versailles. I was to weak too walk thither, even if I could have left my family; and, dreading the influence of the Duc de B. over her, I durst not write. One evening, when I was returning to the prison with some necessaries for Raimond, which I had purchased by two days' hard labour, I met a mob of people flying towards me as if they shunned some deadly pestilence; and presently came up with a covered litter, in which I was informed they were carrying a man to the outskirts of the city who was infected by the plague. I inquired his name.—Gracious God, it was my husband!"—Here the unfortunate Madame Raimond's composure utterly forsook her.

"Alas!"

"Alas!" cried she, shuddering at the dreadful recollection, while torrents of tears trickled down her cheeks, "was I not doomed at my birth to encounter every form of misery? Judge of my feelings when I farther learned, that they were bearing him away to death! His life was to be sacrificed to the community, to stop the current of infection! He was however sensible of his situation, and prayed earnestly to be allowed one night to prepare for death. My wild ravings contributed to procure a favorable answer to his petition.—He was taken to a deserted old street in the suburbs, whither I followed him. No one chose to come near his apartment but myself; I would not be parted from him, and we were consequently left together. Careless of infection myself, and only eager to save him from a forced death like this, which seemed to me the most horrible compulsion that ever barbarity invented, by tears and intreaties I pre-

vailed on him to exchange clothes with me; and in the dead of night, he, too feeble to resist my will, stole away with me from this living tomb. The change of dress, I thought, would prevent our being easily recognised by any of the officers of police who might be sent in search of us; and the improbability of any one suspecting that Raimond, in such a state of sickness and langour, would attempt to escape, satisfied me that we should not be missed before morning. Unable to proceed far however, I halted with him among the ruins of a crazy and spacious old house, within half a street of that we had quitted. Here in a subterraneous cellar, which we fortunately discovered, we remained unsuspected, till, to my unutterable happiness, Raimond recovered. The people of the prison had, I suppose, mistaken the symptoms of his disorder; it appeared to be only a gaol-fever, though uncommonly virulent; and most providentially, in-

deed I may say miraculously, I escaped taking the infection. I had found during this strange seclusion what I had never met with before,—a friend who supplied me with the means of prolonging my beloved husband's existence.

"This was an old widow-woman who lived in the neighbourhood, to whom, on the second day of our concealment, I had ventured to apply for charity. She gave us food and medicines; and, as soon as Raimond was perfectly recovered, she invited us to her house. Excellent creature! never shall I forget her goodness. We remained with her nearly a month, neither daring to look abroad nor inquire after our children, (whom I had left in the house of the woman where I lodged,) fearful of exposing Raimond to re-apprehension for his falsely-charged debts. In spite of all our precaution, however, we were at length detected. Raimond was dragged back to prison, and I hastened to

seek my children. Alas! they were both dead! I did the best I could to submit myself to this misfortune with resignation, but indeed it was a hard struggle. They were such lovely babes, and grown so engaging!—A mere trifle is a blessing of importance to the unfortunate; but two affectionate children to hang about one's neck and soothe one!—They had been such a comfort to me in my heavy hours!"—Again she paused, and let fall a silent unostentatious tear. "I think I may end my narrative here," continued she; "I have already informed you, by letter, how I was induced to apply to you at this time, through the advice of Raimond, after being so long silent. The days of misery are so much alike in the feelings which they produce, that circumstances scarcely seem to vary them, and those of mine that follow have nothing remarkable to distinguish them."

De Bellefonde's heart was deeply affected by this story, and still more so by the pale beauty and simple manners of the interesting narrator. There was that in her appearance which to a stranger precluded all doubt of her sincerity, and De Bellefonde was of all men the most unsuspicious when an appeal was made to his humanity.

The artless description of her love, her virtue in escaping the snares of a seduction so dangerous as that disguised by pity, the heroic contempt of self which she had evinced in her efforts to save her husband, her natural expression of maternal tenderness, and the moderation with which she spoke of her unparalleled misfortunes, were all singly weighed by him, and all exalted her character to something almost above humanity. Without inquiring farther, he released the husband of Madame Raimond from prison,

and put them into a neat house, furnished with every thing that comfort required.

Monsieur Raimond was all that his wife had described him,—singularly handsome, manly, and engaging; and De Bellefonde felt himself farther justified by *his* appearance in his prepossession for Madame. Clear-sighted and scrupulous in managing the affairs of others, he was to the last degree careless and incautious in regard to his own. He however applied to the Duc de B. for confirmation of some parts of Madame Raimond's narrative, before he would venture to invest her with the fortune which she declared herself entitled to.

'The Duc owned that she was indeed the Comte de Montvillier's neice, and that she had been educated by the Comtesse. But he declared her to be a woman of the most worthless character, and treated as an infamous calumny her assertion

sertion that Raimond was the Comtesse's son. The will, he said, was incontestably a forgery; for that no such persons had existed as the witnesses signed to it, and the Comtesse herself within an hour of her death had declared to him that she had made Madame de la Voitière her sole heir, (excepting a trifling legacy to this woman, in pity to her indigence,) and named him as her guardian; relative to which office she gave him some particular instructions, which it was impossible she could have thought of, had she entertained the slightest idea of making any other disposition of her property. He said it was well known that Madame Raimond had lived with the Baron de Vernon on the most dishonorable terms, and that after such a conduct, independent of her degrading marriage, it could not be expected that any of her former connections would attend to her applications, or ever again harbour a wretch who had so flagrantly disgraced them,

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He added, that her husband was no better than a common sharper, a gamester without money, and a specious sycophant without principle.

De Bellefonde was somewhat staggered by these contradictory reports; but there appeared so much passion and prejudice in the Duc's manner of stating them, and so little of either in Madame Raimond's simple narration, that he could not suffer himself to be convinced by the former without extending his inquiries farther. He knew the Duc to be incapable of asserting any thing that he was not himself firmly persuaded of, but he also knew him to be a man of strong pride and immoveable prejudices. The circumstance of Madame Raimond's inferior marriage was sufficient to exasperate the Comtesse, and render her for ever obnoxious to the worst stigmas of the Duc: but, whatever her husband might be, the validity of *her* claims could not be weakened either.

either by the obscurity of his birth or the impropriety of his conduct. The testimony of the Baron de Vernon would corroborate or confute one part of Mad. Raimond's story, and according to this, he thought, he might form a fair presumptive judgement of the whole. He immediately went to the Baron, and solemnly adjured him to declare the truth of all he knew concerning Madame Raimond. At first the Baron attempted to evade his questions: but he was a man of honor, according to the fashionable signification of the term, and when he found his *honor* appealed to, he could not prevaricate. He confirmed the truth of every thing Madame Raimond had said relating to himself. He acknowledged that he had found her in the circumstances she described. Under pretence of taking her to her husband, he had carried her to his own house, and used every artifice to seduce her. She had resisted all his pleadings and all his

stratagems, he said, and that, whatever she might now be, she was then strictly innocent and virtuous. He also confirmed the story of the duel.—What had happened to Madame Raimond after she left him, he did not certainly know, but he had heard many reports to her disadvantage that were in very general circulation. De Bellefonde saw more of prejudice than probability in these reports. When a young woman was cast off by her relations, he considered, any scandal concerning her would be industriously propagated and implicitly believed, however inconsistent or unjust. He perceived too, that the Baron de Vernon's reasons for the reluctance with which he had explained himself, arose from an unwillingness to discover the baseness and vanity of his own conduct; first, in persisting in his attempts to seduce a woman whom he found resolutely innocent; and, next, in his never having contradicted a calumny against her which he knew

knew to be groundless. De Bellefonde now thought that Madame Raimond's sincerity admitted not of a doubt; and, on comparing the hand-writing of the will with that of some papers of the Comtesse de Montvillier's which he had in his possession, they were found so exactly similar, that it was hardly possible to detect the slightest difference.

It was in vain that the Duc de B. remonstrated with reason, with passion, or threats. De Bellefonde was pre-convinced, and only shocked to think that he had so long possessed wealth which belonged to this poor woman, while she had been labouring against every species of hardship and misfortune.—By a legal instrument, properly signed and registered, he made over to her all of his late wife's fortune that was still in his hands, and supplied the deficiency out of his own income. Madame Raimond would hardly

ly be prevailed on to accept it all; she had no wish beyond simple independence; affluence was necessary to *him*, she urged; it was not even desired by her. But the Marquis was peremptory; his upright nature could not brook the idea of being in the smallest degree unjust.

The Raimonds left him, apparently overwhelmed by gratitude, and invoking a thousand blessings on his head; and De Bellefonde experienced in that moment a satisfaction which amply repaid him for the loss of his fortune, and almost for the overthrow of his Utopian beneficence. But his self-approbation was soon at an end. When the Duc de B. heard that he had actually completed this hasty and imprudent deed, his rage and indignation for a time knew no bounds: the tumults of *passion* subsided, but they settled into a decided and deep-rooted enmity against De Bellefonde.

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He went to him for the last time. "When I knew you first," said he, "I saw much unadulterated good in your nature, opposed by a few errors which originated in virtue. I have seen the latter by degrees lose every trace of the virtue that excused them; yet still I loved you from habit. I have seen these errors gain the ascendency over reason, truth, and justice; and I now despise and renounce you for ever from principle!" De Bellefonde's first impulse was to challenge this rude and insulting censor, but he reasoned awhile upon it, and subdued the turbulence of his resentment. "A minister whose life is devoted to the public service," said he, "has no right to stake it on a private quarrel. *My* death at present might throw the nation into serious embarrassment, by the difficulty of immediately choosing a successor adequate to the exigences of the state, and *his* I could never forgive myself for. But why should I attempt to revenge an error

of

of judgement? It will be sufficient punishment to find himself deceived, and that he has sacrificed a sincere friend to an erroneous prejudice."

A very short time however shewed De Bellefonde that he himself was the dupe. He discovered from the most unquestionable testimony that the will was indeed a forgery; that Madame Raimond's sole virtue was her chastity, which extravagant attachment to her husband rather than principle had preserved; that her whole story, except those parts of it corroborated by the Duc and the Baron de Vernon, was an artful romance, purposely wrought up by a train of incidents and a style of language which she knew, were best calculated to operate upon his feelings; and that ever since his wife's death she had been preparing her stratagem, by privately making acquaintance with his character and history, and those parts of his heart that were

were most vulnerable to sympathy. De Bellefonde too found himself without hope of redress.—Before these discoveries were made to him, Monsieur and Madame Raimond had absconded, having first drawn away the whole of the refunded money, and no one knew whither they were gone, nor could give the slightest information by which to trace their flight. He found that he had been unjust to his children, without any palliative but credulity; and that he had robbed himself of the means of gratifying his favorite wishes, without even the consolation of having made the sacrifice to virtue. In the bitterness of his heart he cursed all mankind, and irritated sensibility had well nigh degenerated into a deep-rooted misanthropy.

CHAP. X.

Ha! what said'st thou of the picture?
'Twas fair and mild as sleeping cherubim;
And yet the eye look'd full of mournful thought;—
'Twas bright but sad.

A. MORLEY.

THERE was but *one* misfortune De Bellefonde had ever met with that wounded him more acutely than the loss of the Duc de B.'s friendship He was a proud and obstinate old man, but there was that about him which made his very errors respected,—an integrity in honor, an impartiality in what he thought justice, and a generosity of temper that shewed itself in deeds rather than words, and created love where he did not seem to seek

seek for it. Of all the members of a fluctuating court, he was the one, during the former and the present reign, who maintained his influence and authority most uniformly and unimpaired; he was respected by all ranks of people, though it was a respect mingled with fear; and if De Bellefonde had studiously sought the means most effectual to weaken his own popularity, he could not more surely have succeeded than by exasperating the Duc de B.

De Bellefonde however stood in no need of popular favor, while supported by the King's friendship and partiality; and he was too proud to be humbled by its wane, while conscious that he still did his duty to the public. It only remained for his enemies to impeach his administration, or destroy his favor with the King by insidious misrepresentation. Though he was now personally disliked, he was respected as a minister; and, among

mong all those who regarded him with jealousy or envy, he had but one enemy base enough to project his downfal. This was the man whom he most loved, the man whom he had raised from obscurity, and supported by his interest against the tide of popular prejudice,—the perfidious, malignant, and ambitious, Comte de l'Avignon. Still dependent on De Bellefonde, however, and cautious in villany, Del'Avignon long watched in vain for a covered pretext by which he might impeach his friend without exposing himself. With all his speciousness and insinuation, he was little beloved, and generally suspected; and in particular he was disliked by the King, who only retained him at court out of regard to De Bellefonde. All this De l'Avignon knew, and while these circumstances exasperated the more his envy of De Bellefonde, who possessed such superior influence, they also enfeebled his treacherous aims. He could not accuse the man who was loading him with

with benefits, without discovering his own baseness; and the story of Angelica Conway, which was the only real ground of accusation that he could adduce, being entrusted to no one but himself, could not be made public without immediately betraying the channel whence it came.

It was necessary therefore to wait until his own interest could be placed on a more independent basis, before he attempted to aim the long-meditated death-stroke at his friend's; and what will not persevering hypocrisy effect, when united with distinguished abilities?

By the skilful application of these, De l'Avignon at length saw prejudice vanish before him. In a course of years, rising from one gradation to another, he found himself seated in the Duc de B.'s place, (rendered vacant by the death of that nobleman,) possessed of affluence which enabled him to recover all the spen-

dor that had belonged to his ancestors, and a considerable share of influence in the party to which he had attached himself. De Bellefonde, detained at court contrary to his inclination, still reigned the leading star of administration, and was still the object of his envy and rivalry, without affording him any safe opening for the purposes of his treachery: for he had now a character to maintain which required double circumspection, from the danger there was in reviving those suspicions which had formerly stamped him with all the villainy he really possessed.

Some circumstances at length occurred, which aided his designs against De Bellefonde: though used with caution, they yet wanted much of being matured to the desired end.

During the Marquis's seclusion in Switzerland with Angelica, a young painter

painter of rising talents came to reside at Villeneuve, where he meant for some time to pursue the business of his profession in a retired line, in order to perfect himself in the art before he should engage in a more public career. While he was amusing himself with making some slight sketches near Fraismont, accident had introduced him to De Bellefonde's notice. Finding that miniature-painting was his chief study, and being much pleased with the spirit and execution of some of his performances which he happened to have about him, De Bellefonde took him home with him, (having first been assured that he was a native of these parts, and could not possibly be acquainted with his real rank,) and entreated Angelica to indulge him by sitting to him. Angelica, however, whose fears of discovery were ever awake, highly disapproved of this unguarded introduction of a stranger; who, however ignorant he might at present be of their real

real name and rank, might hereafter become acquainted with circumstances hostile to their safety; and De Bellefonde, persuaded by her advice, engaged the artist to secresy before he was permitted to begin his task. This precaution only served to heighten curiosity already excited. The young man had heard various surmises concerning these strangers, and report dwelt so lavishly on the beauty of the fair recluse, that he conceived it a direct confirmation of what was at this time generally suspected, that they were foreigners of rank, come thither to hide an illicit connection; but, when he saw Angelica, and found that fame had neither exaggerated her beauty, nor the air of high birth which he beheld in her dignified carriage,—perhaps to him more distant and dignified from the mistrust with which she regarded him, he could not resist the temptation of retaining a copy of the picture for himself, which, though his work was completed at Fraismont, he contrived

contrived to sketch out unobserved, while engaged in finishing the other. Captivated by the beauty of the subject, and having the expression of her countenance strongly depicted on his memory, on his return to Villeneuve he immediately began to complete the sketch he had thus stolen; imagining that his fortune would be made by having it in his power to gratify the curious with a sight of those sequestered charms which had made so much noise among the gossiping circles of Villeneuve; and perhaps the mystery attending the fair *inconnue* might by this means be elucidated. With such expectations, the utmost efforts of his art were not wanting to perfect the resemblance, and he succeeded even beyond his hopes. It was finished in the most exquisite style, and greatly surpassed any of his former works: but, fearing that the liberty he had taken might reach the ears of those whom it concerned, he was very cautious of exhibiting it while they remained in the neigh-

neighbourhood; and it was not till many years afterwards that he reaped profits from it adequate to his expectations. Being invited to try his fortune in Paris, and having a good prospect of success in that emporium of the fine arts, both from his interest and abilities, he at length quitted his native place, and went thither. Here he soon rose to eminence, and, through the interest of a patron at Versailles, several of his most valuable works were exhibited to the King and Queen, who placed him under their royal patronage. The King was particularly pleased with his style, which was particularly bold and masterly, though in most of his pictures the inferior graces of tints and finishing were but hasty and imperfect; and one day he honored him with a visit, and with his usual affability condescended to point out what he thought were his chief beauties and defects. "If your Majesty objects to the slightness of the drawing," replied the painter, "I have

have a few pictures in my possession in which that fault is corrected. One of them in particular was finished with more study and minuteness than I have ever since had either leisure or inclination to bestow on any other; and I have lately revived the colours, which were injured by the lapse of time since it was drawn; but, as the likeness was obtained rather piratically, I have not yet ventured to expose it here." The picture alluded to appeared to his Majesty not only pre-eminent in execution, but also in the singular beauty of the subject. It was the resemblance of a very young woman, of the most exact symmetry of features, over which an air of touching sweetness and sadness seemed diffused by the hand of magic; for it was so harmoniously lambent, that it was impossible to trace it on any particular part. The lips were parted by a placid smile, in which dejection seemed to contend with natural benignity; and the bright blue eyes cast

upwards, through their dark silky lashes, a look of chastened hope. The soft pink of the cheek was blended with the most transparent whiteness; and the light brown curls that slightly shaded the forehead were confined on the top by a black veil, which, falling upon the neck, gave its fairness an almost dazzling brilliancy. The King was in raptures with the picture; he was never tired of gazing on it; and his curiosity to know the original was still farther excited by the reserve of the painter. That reserve however was not invincible; the King paid an extravagant price for the picture, and soon prevailed on him to tell him all he knew concerning the lady whose resemblance it was. The mysterious relation created farther curiosity and conjecture. At the time of De Bellefonde's seclusion in Switzerland, the King was not sufficiently intimate with him to be acquainted with any of his private affairs, and he had never heard Fraismont named as the place of his retreat,

treat, although he was not ignorant that a strange mystery had attended his first marriage. Towards *him* therefore his conjectures did not glance; but his increasing admiration of the picture rendered him eager to gain farther information respecting the beautiful incognita. His inquiries however were long ineffectual. The likeness was faintly recognized by several persons to whom he shewed it, who had seen and been dazzled by the beauty of Angelica; but so many years had elapsed since her appearance at Versailles, that, without the walls of St. Etienne, there were few who retained a recollection of her person sufficiently distinct to assign the resemblance to her. The King had lately twice shewn the alarming picture to the startled De Bellefonde, and remarked with a degree of surprise, which however the latter evaded satisfying, the alternate symptoms of anguish and alarm produced by the sight of it on his expressive countenance. But a circumstance soon

occurred which left De Bellefonde no refuge from his scrutiny.

His Majesty was one day called suddenly to Paris by the recollection of some business which required his presence and immediate dispatch, and, taking with him only the Comte de l'Avignon, who was now much about his person, he proceeded to De Bellefonde's house, after having effected the object of his journey, without sending to apprise him of his approach. De Bellefonde had that morning been employed in arranging some papers belonging to his second wife, and in the cabinet where they were deposited was that picture of his beloved Angelica of which the King's was a copy. He took it out; the more accurately he examined it, the greater was his alarm on recollecting the other. Not only the features and complexion, but the dresses were critically the same in every particular. He found the painter had betrayed him; yet, from

what the King had told him, he was convinced that the man knew nothing of the real name and rank of the original, and strove to flatter himself, that, if he could prevail on the King to part with the picture to him, so as to prevent its being shewn where the resemblance could be recognized, he might still be able to evade a discovery through this channel; for his own face and figure were so much altered since those days of deceitful happiness, that there was no possibility of the painter recognizing him. His only anxiety therefore was how to accomplish this important end, without awakening the King's suspicion as to his real interest in the picture.

He was sitting mournfully ruminating upon it, with his own picture of Angelica lying before him, when Adonia, who was accustomed to practise her musical lessons on an organ in the inner apartment of her father's study, entered softly behind him,

him; and stood some minutes gazing on the miniature with silent admiration before he observed her. "O my dear papa," exclaimed she at length, "what a lovely creature that must have been!" De Bellefonde started; at first an emotion of anger impelled him to reprove her intrusion; but she looked so happy and unconscious, he had not power to form it into words; and he thought now, when she was of an age to share his confidence, it was unkind to appear distrustful of her. "Did you ever see any body who resembled this picture?" said he. "Indeed, papa," replied she with innocent naïveté, "I think it very like myself;—though undoubtedly," she added, blushing at the remembrance of the admiration of it she had just expressed, "it is much handsomer." "You have not mistaken, Adonia," said her father with a deep sigh: "you are like your mother; but a being equally beautiful with what she was nature rarely fashions." "My mother!" exclaimed

claimed Adonia with vivacity, "was she indeed so lovely? Well, I wonder, papa, how you could ever marry again!" "A daughter," replied he sternly, "has no right to question the conduct of a parent. I may have had motives for mine, improper for you to be made acquainted with. But you see I am busy now. You may retire to your music."

Adonia silently obeyed, but it was with a full heart. It was almost the first time her father had ever spoken harshly to her, and she could not easily compose her spirits from the shock his rebuke had given her.—The organ was out of order; the book she wanted had been mislaid; she could not play; and she continued turning over her music-books, without knowing what she was about, till the King and the Comte de l'Avignon had entered the study, and were engaged in conversation with her father. De Bellefonde had just began his inquiries to

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the King respecting the picture, which he thought admitted not of delay, when Adonia, who supposed the person to whom he was talking to be only one of the servants, (having heard a bell ring a few moments before,) re-entered the apartment in order to pass to her own.

Perceiving that they were strangers who were with her father, she hastily retreated; but the King, who had already observed her, immediately rose, and with a most winning condescension led her back to the room. The Marquis's looks betrayed singular displeasure, for Adonia had hitherto been kept entirely secluded, and he had studiously endeavoured to prevent her being seen by the King, while the story of the picture was so recent; but it was now no time for regret, and, with the best grace he could rally, he introduced her in form to his Majesty. The King, who had never before seen her since she was quite a child, was for some moments lost

lost in admiration and surprise. She had now passed her sixteenth year; her figure was strikingly graceful and dignified, and her face, more Hebe-like than her unfortunate mother's, was infinitely more intelligent, though the features were strongly similar. At this moment too, the notice she attracted from the strangers, and the remembrance of her father's late reproof, together with the present look of scrutinizing solicitude with which he regarded her, spread over her countenance a timid anxiety, such as heightened the resemblance; and the King had no sooner paid his first compliments, than, with a tone in which surprise was mingled with suspicion of the truth, he exclaimed, "How astonishingly like the picture we were speaking of! One might almost pronounce at the first glance, that Mademoiselle de Rosier was either the sister or the daughter of its beautiful original; and I shall now have a double motive for valuing it." "You do my daughter too much

honor,"

honor," said De Bellefonde with strong embarrassment, "by making a comparison where in my opinion there can be no competition." "Pardon me, De Bellefonde," replied the King, "I can easily believe that Mademoiselle de Rosier is not sufficiently tutored in the school of vanity to think herself injured by the comparison; but I am equally of opinion that you and every one else must acknowledge that the superiority belongs to her: till now I imagined it without a rival, but I see, lovely as it is, that it can be surpassed." "Ah! how can you say so!" said Adonia, with the simple frankness that belonged to her character, as yet unacquainted with the manners of the world. "I do not want to be made vainer than I am, for I fear I am but too vain already;" and she blushed deeply as she spoke, from real consciousness that she spoke but truth.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.